



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 2 SEP 2022

	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	09/02 Day 191 of the Russia invasion 09/02 IAEA: physical integrity of plant 'violated' 09/02 IAEA risky mission to access nuclear plant 09/02 China company profits collapsing 09/02 India first homegrown aircraft carrier 09/01 Ukraine pushes to retake occupied lands 09/01 What can UN IAEA inspectors accomplish? 09/01 Gorbachev legacy: cautionary tale of power 09/01 NKorea: UN rights monitor is US 'puppet' 09/01 Myanmar: more jail time for ousted leader 09/01 Rival militias reprisal attacks southern Iraq 09/01 Iran responds to nuclear talks; US doubtful 09/01 Poland: Germany owes \$1.3T for WWII 09/01 Conflict in Ethiopia Tigray region widening 09/01 Plan: 3M 'civilian warriors' to defend Taiwan	09/02 Houston alarm: migrant children missing 09/02 Tropical Storm Danielle strengthens 09/01 Pandemic erased math, reading progress 09/01 Updated boosters expected within days 09/01 Summer of viruses: travel, warming trends 09/01 Mississippi squandered welfare funds? 09/01 Chicago mayor: Texas 'racist' for bussing 09/01 Companies struggle: influx of new workers 09/01 Mentally ill face fatal risk w/police 09/01 Firefighters face mental health struggles 09/01 National Insider Threat Awareness Month 09/01 National Preparedness Month: adjust plans 09/01 Extreme heat, wildfires pummel California 09/01 Calif. climate vulnerable to global warming 09/01 Climate threat to drinking water nationwide 09/01 Gas prices decline into Labor Day weekend 09/01 Seatbelt use down, car fatality crashes up 09/01 Jackson Mississippi facing water crisis 09/01 Recall: Ford SUVs	09/01 In Seattle, it's almost normal 09/01 Free transit for most youths across WA 09/01 Downtown businesses pay street cleanup 09/01 Port Angeles teachers' strike next week? 09/01 Kent teachers' strike moves into 2nd week 09/01 School districts eye safety improvements 09/01 School districts struggle to hire bus drivers 09/01 Rental rates skyrocket; pullback home sales 09/01 Lightest WA wildfire season in decade 09/01 Dept. Commerce calls out Spokane Co. 09/01 Oregon psychiatric hospital must cap stays
Cyber, Tech Awareness Go to articles	09/02 Raspberry Robin link to Russian group 09/01 Effective credential phishing attack 09/01 Montenegro suffers ransomware attack 09/01 Hacks tied to Russia war: minor impact 09/01 Google cuts Russian disinformation sites	09/01 Instagram phishing lure: blue badges 09/01 Ragnar Locker targets critical industries 09/01 Snake Keylogger new malspam campaign 09/01 NSA, CISA: software supply chain security 09/01 Neopets hackers had network access 18mo. 09/01 Police best-kept secret? Location data app 09/01 China demands US drop tech export curbs	
Terrorism, Extremism Go to articles	09/02 Afghan mosque blast kills 18 09/01 'Salad bar' extremism on rise in Canada 09/01 Al-Shabab attacks central Somalia town		
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	09/02 New Zealand: warmest, wettest winter 09/01 Climate change: Zimbabwe moves animals	09/01 Climate change toll outpace govt. estimates	
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	09/01 Argentina VP assassination attempt 09/01 Meth, money, militias: Basra as narco-town	09/02 'Red flag' laws get little use 09/01 'Sanctuary community' more crime? 09/01 Pileup of sex abuse scandals: why? 09/01 Mass shootings obscure daily gun toll 09/01 CBP frontline: surging fentanyl seizures 09/01 Ex-NYPD cop jailed 10yrs for Capitol riot 09/01 Ohio cop kills unarmed Black man in bed 09/01 NC school stabbing attack: 1 dead, 2 injured	09/01 Kitsap Co. traffic stop nets guns, drugs 09/01 Seattle community court referrals surge 09/01 Seattle homicides highest month since 2008 09/01 Idaho police: 'skittles', 'rainbow' fentanyl

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Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Free transit for most youths across WA
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/free-transit-starts-today-for-most-youths-across-wa/
GIST	<p>Young transit riders in most of Washington won't pay their bus fares today or any day until they turn 19, as agencies across the state pivot toward providing free rides for people 18 and under.</p> <p>While there are many examples of individual cities offering free rides to young people — or to everyone — Washington's actions as a state are unique.</p>

The shift is one piece of a massive 16-year, nearly \$17 billion transportation funding measure passed mostly along party lines during the 2022 legislative session in Olympia. While the package included billions in new spending on roads and highways, Democratic lawmakers set aside more than \$3 billion for transit in the state, over the opposition of the minority Republicans. About half of that is available to local transit agencies on the condition they make trains, buses and ferries free for youth. Every agency has signaled they will do so.

In a funding package that may feel intangible to Washington residents in the short term, free transit represents an immediate and noticeable change for families in the state, which proponents say will lower transportation barriers and train the next generation of riders to think outside the car.

“We were clear that we wanted to make an early impact,” said the chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, Sen. Marko Liias, D-Lynnwood.

Skeptics, meanwhile, view the spending as misplaced, even framing the Democrats’ strategy as government indoctrination, and question the new program’s enforceability.

“We’re teaching our kids that there are things in life that are just free,” said ranking member of the Senate Transportation Committee, Sen. Curtis King, R-Yakima. “And we all know that when you analyze it, there’s nothing that’s free.”

The deadline for implementing free youth rides is Oct. 1. But as of Thursday, nearly every bus agency in the state — including Sound Transit, King County Metro, Community Transit, Pierce Transit and more — already no longer require fares for people under 19, timing the rollout with the start of a new school year.

Washington State Ferries and Amtrak won’t begin their programs until Oct. 1.

For Addie Trask, 11, free transit means freedom for both her and her family, as she gets ready to begin sixth grade in North Seattle. Her school is close to where she lives, but walking there would mean crossing one of Seattle’s most dangerous arterials. So she and a group of friends plan to ride Metro every day together, leapfrogging the road and freeing her parents to take her sister to a different school farther away.

“Free ORCA cards for kids is going to help people save money and be able to ride on the bus and ride transit more,” she said.

The turn toward making rides free for youth comes at a precarious time for public transportation. Ridership is still lagging — hovering around 50% of pre-pandemic levels for King County Metro — even as car traffic ticks upward.

Opening the doors to young people is unlikely to resuscitate those numbers; youth make up around 5% of riders on Community Transit in Snohomish County, said Chris Simmons, manager of system planning for the agency.

But the hope among transit agencies is to weave public transportation more into the daily lives of families.

“I think it encourages youth to think about transit as something that’s not just for school but for other activities as well,” said Sean Hawks, director of communications and marketing for King County Metro.

Pierce Transit provided around 750,000 youth rides last year, said CEO Mike Griffus. The agency isn’t setting any hard goals for this year, but Griffus said he hopes and expects to see that number tick up by 20%, maybe more, as a result of eliminating charges.

“I think it will give them an opportunity to go places they haven’t gone before,” he said.

Lilianna Kully-Rivera is starting high school next week. The Seattle freshman won’t commute there by bus, but will use transit for extracurriculars, like dance or to meet friends for ice skating. She’s used the

bus system her whole life, and imagines that will be easier for her and others now that she doesn't need to think about fares.

"It just makes it easier for so many people who couldn't necessarily otherwise ride," she said.

Near Puget Sound, agencies that use ORCA coordinated their policies to begin at the same time, the result of monthly calls among bus and rail services between Snohomish and Pierce counties to cut down on rider confusion.

Other agencies got a head start: Everett Transit has not charged young people since July 1. Pacific Transit in Southwest Washington started the program Aug. 15. In some less-populated parts of the state, like Jefferson and Island counties, ridership was already free for youth.

The biggest question has been implementation: How would transit agencies know who was 18 and who was 19? The state has asked for tallies of youth ridership.

The first year is likely to be informal. ORCA agencies are working with schools to get cards in the hands of young people for them to tap, even if they're not being charged. But that will take time — especially because there is a shortage on hard materials for the cards. Meantime, students can flash school IDs or simply board.

"We really just want them to show up and take transit," said Hawks. "A year from now, we'll have more cards in place and have more opportunities for people to show their age," he said.

Among the critiques of the program is enforcement.

"This whole process is tough to enforce," said King. "How are you supposed to know if the person is 16, 18, 20, 22? Are you going to check every person who gets on the bus?"

Griffus acknowledged there would likely be some squishiness around enforcement. "There's always bad actors," he said. "We expect that there will be some people like that. Our instruction to operators is to let them ride and not get into an altercation."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Poland: Germany owes \$1.3T for WWII
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/poland-germany-world-war-ii-warsaw-49b0cf77745a7b1cabfaa884c3bf0035?utm_source=Connatix&utm_medium=HomePage
GIST	<p>WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland's top politician said Thursday that the government will seek equivalent of some \$1.3 trillion in reparations from Germany for the Nazis' World War II invasion and occupation of his country.</p> <p>Jaroslav Kaczynski, leader of the Law and Justice party, announced the huge claim at the release of a long-awaited report on the cost to the country of years of Nazi German occupation as it marks 83 years since the start of World War II.</p> <p>"We not only prepared the report but we have also taken the decision as to the further steps," Kaczynski said during the report's presentation.</p> <p>"We will turn to Germany to open negotiations on the reparations," Kaczynski said, adding it will be a "long and not an easy path" but "one day will bring success."</p> <p>He insisted the move would serve "true Polish-German reconciliation" that would be based on "truth."</p> <p>He claimed the German economy is capable of paying the bill.</p>

Germany argues compensation was paid to East Bloc nations in the years after the war while territories that Poland lost in the East as borders were redrawn were compensated with some of Germany's pre-war lands. Berlin calls the matter closed.

Germany's Foreign Ministry said Thursday the government's position remains "unchanged" in that "the question of reparations is concluded."

"Poland long ago, in 1953, waived further reparations and has repeatedly confirmed this waiver," the ministry said in an emailed response to a Associated Press query about the new Polish report.

"This is a significant basis for today's European order. Germany stands by its responsibility for World War II politically and morally."

Poland's right-wing government argues that the country which was the war's first victim has not been fully compensated by neighboring Germany, which is now one of its major partners within the European Union.

"Germany has never really accounted for its crimes against Poland," Kaczynski said, claiming that many Germans who committed war crimes lived in impunity in Germany after the war.

Top leaders including Kaczynski, who is Poland's chief policy maker, and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki attended the ceremonial release of the report at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, rebuilt from wartime ruins.

The release of the three-volume report was the focus of national observances of the anniversary of the war that began Sep. 1, 1939, with Nazi Germany's bombing and invasion of Poland that was followed by more than five years of brutal occupation.

The head of the report team, lawmaker Arkadiusz Mularczyk, said it was impossible to place a financial value on the loss of some 5.2 million lives he blamed on the German occupation.

He listed losses to the infrastructure, industry, farming, culture, deportations to Germany for forced labor and efforts to turn Polish children into Germans.

A team of more than 30 economists, historians and other experts worked on the report since 2017. The issue has created bilateral tensions.

The war was "one of the most terrible tragedies in our history," President Andrzej Duda said during early morning observances at the Westerplatte peninsula near Gdansk, one of the first places to be attacked in the Nazi invasion.

"Not only because it took our freedom, not only because it took our state from us, but also because this war meant millions of victims among Poland's citizens and irreparable losses to our homeland and our nation," Duda said.

In Germany, the government's official for German-Polish cooperation, Dietmar Nietan, said in a statement that Sept. 1 "remains a day of guilt and shame for Germany that reminds us time and again not to forget the crimes carried out by Germany" that are the "darkest chapter in our history" and still affect bilateral relations.

Reconciliation offered by people in Poland is "the basis on which we can look toward the future together in a united Europe," Nietan said.

Poland's government rejects a 1953 declaration by the country's then-communist leaders, under pressure from the Soviet Union, agreeing not to make any further claims on Germany.

	<p>An opposition lawmaker, Grzegorz Schetyna, says the report is just a “game in the internal politics” and insists Poland needs to build good relations with Berlin.</p> <p>In a country where bullet holes from the war could still be seen on houses not so long ago, recent surveys have shown that Polish public opinion is roughly equally divided on the issue of reparations. Many families still keep alive memories of family members lost in the war.</p> <p>Some 6 million of Poland’s citizens, including 3 million Jews, were killed in the war. Some of them were victims of the Soviet Red Army that invaded from the east.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/02 Houston alarm: migrant children missing
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-dozens-migrant-children-reported-missing-houston-raising-alarms-2022-09-02/
GIST	<p>Sept 2 (Reuters) - Federal and local officials are scrambling to locate close to a dozen unaccompanied migrant children, after Houston police raised concerns about a trend of migrant children reported missing in the Texas city, according to U.S. government officials and related emails reviewed by Reuters.</p> <p>The cases underscore the challenges for U.S. President Joe Biden's administration as it faces a record number of unaccompanied kids arriving at the southwest border it must safely and quickly release to sponsors in the United States.</p> <p>Earlier this summer, a Houston police detective alerted the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) after discovering what looked like a pattern of migrant kids missing from the homes of their U.S. sponsors, according to an HHS official, who declined to be identified.</p> <p>HHS is the federal agency that oversees the custody and release of children after they have crossed the U.S.-Mexico border without a parent or legal guardian.</p> <p>In August, in a rare step, the HHS refugee office implemented an emergency supervisory review of releases of unaccompanied kids to non-parent sponsors in the Houston area, according to the HHS official and an internal email seen by Reuters.</p> <p>The agency found that since late last year, 57 unaccompanied migrant kids had been reported missing in Houston, the HHS official, and two additional sources familiar with the situation, said. Included in the count were nine kids who ran away from HHS shelters in the Houston area, the official said.</p> <p>As of Aug. 26, 46 of them had been confirmed safe, the official said. So far authorities say they have found no evidence of sex or labor trafficking.</p> <p>Some of the missing kids who have been located are now 18 or older. A handful left the homes of relatives acting as sponsors to join parents who were in the United States, the official said, adding that the number of cases being reviewed is small compared to the volume of overall releases to the area.</p> <p>Harris County, Texas, where Houston is located, is the No.1 destination for releases of unaccompanied minors, with more than 6,300 released between October 2021, when this fiscal year began, through June 2022.</p> <p>More than 200,000 non-Mexican minors - who cannot be quickly turned around at the border – have been caught crossing alone since Biden took office in January 2021.</p> <p>Early in Biden's presidency, the rise in unaccompanied minors overwhelmed Border Patrol stations, leaving children stuck in crowded conditions beyond a legal limit of 72 hours.</p>

Biden officials took steps to expand emergency shelters and streamline the release of children to sponsors – usually parents or relatives – in the United States, while at the same time seeking to ensure they are not sent to homes where they could face danger or mistreatment.

In some cases – about 15% of all releases in the 2022 fiscal year so far – kids are released to more distant relatives or unrelated adults who have been vetted, according to HHS data.

An official with the HHS inspector general's office had never seen this scale of unaccompanied children reported missing in one area, but said it was not clear if the trend was new or just recently uncovered by the Houston Police Department.

The city's police department said it was "currently conducting investigations into reports of missing, unaccompanied juveniles" but declined to answer additional questions.

WATCHING FOR RED FLAGS

Mario Bruzzone, a senior policy adviser at the Women's Refugee Commission, which advocates for unaccompanied children, said in some cases, sponsor relationships can break down after a honeymoon period following reunification.

Kids may have conflicts and run away due to trauma experienced in home countries or en route to the United States, he said. Runaways tend to be "an unfortunate part of this world of child welfare work," he said.

"There's a real tension here in terms of how we do releases," Bruzzone said. "For child welfare reasons, we want to make sure that they can get to homes as fast as possible, while we're also doing the screening necessary to ensure that the homes they are going to are safe and stable."

During the review of Houston area cases, HHS discovered dozens of children had been released to similar addresses, which can be a red flag for possible trafficking, according to the HHS official and another source. The HHS official said the agency determined the addresses were in apartment complexes where many immigrant families live and not a significant cause for concern.

The official said that around 60 cases for release had been subject to additional review and of those 53 had been cleared for release as of Aug. 26.

Last year, releases from HHS custody were halted in and around the southern Alabama town of Enterprise. An HHS probe at the time focused on whether minors were falling victim to traffickers exploiting them for labor, three sources familiar with the investigations said.

While investigators discovered no evidence of child trafficking, they found "exploitative" working conditions for some migrants living in the area and Reuters uncovered cases of children working in industrial settings in the state.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Conflict in Ethiopia Tigray region widening
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/africa-kenya-ethiopia-eritrea-8b03f942e9e75d96fa3d11cb97361070
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Officials in Ethiopia's restive Tigray region allege that Ethiopian forces have again teamed up with those from neighboring Eritrea to attack the northern area.</p> <p>Ethiopia's government did not comment Thursday after the allegations by the Tigray External Affairs Office and by Tigray forces spokesman Getachew Reda, who said a "massive" offensive had begun in northwestern Tigray.</p> <p>But the government alleged in turn that Tigray forces' own fighting had intensified.</p>

Claims by both sides in the renewed conflict are difficult to verify since the Tigray region remains largely cut off from the world and without basic services. The conflict that began in November 2020 had calmed earlier this year but resumed last week after efforts at peace talks failed.

With both sides choosing to fight instead of talk, millions of people in Tigray remain severely deprived of food and other supplies and those in the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions again fear for their lives.

Ethiopia's foreign minister and the lead negotiator for the previously planned talks, Demeke Mekonnen, told diplomats in the capital, Addis Ababa, that the government is still open to peace efforts. "But we will take whatever measures are needed to secure the country's sovereignty," he said.

A witness in the Afar region's capital, Semera, told The Associated Press he saw a large contingent of Ethiopian army units mobilizing on Sunday and Monday and moving north toward Eritrea, next to the Tigray region, the next day. He spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

Eritrea's Information Ministry, in a statement Thursday, accused the Tigray forces of starting the latest fighting.

In a rare admission, Ethiopian officials last week said federal and allied forces had retreated from the strategic Amhara region town of Kobo, south of Tigray.

On Wednesday, both Ethiopia's government and Tigray forces announced the opening of a new front in the border area with Sudan.

A resident of the historic Lalibela town in the Amhara region told the AP he saw a "previously unseen" level of aircraft movement on Thursday, following Tigray officials' allegation that federal forces were conducting several dozen flights to the town.

Ethiopia's government on Thursday again warned against publicizing military movements, saying anyone who supports or assists the propaganda of the "enemy" will face up to life in prison.

On social media, many Ethiopians are expressing their support to the government in the latest fighting. But some question Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration's handling of the war, and organizations like the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia are calling on both sides to give peace a chance and sit for talks.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Mentally ill face fatal risk w/police
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/health-police-oregon-mental-salem-a5a933c76760a8d3929595f846876bb0
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. (AP) — One summer night, Misty Castillo stepped out of her house in Salem, Oregon, called 911 and asked for the police, saying her son was mentally ill, was assaulting her and her husband and had a knife.</p> <p>"He's drunk and he's high and he's mentally ill," Castillo told the emergency dispatcher, emphasizing again her son's mental condition. Less than five minutes later, a police officer burst into the house and shot Arcadio Castillo III dead as he stood, his mother said later, "frozen like a deer in headlights."</p> <p>"He didn't try to calm him down. He just came in and immediately shot my son," Castillo said.</p> <p>Time and time again across the U.S., people experiencing mental health crises are being killed by police, but the exact number remains unknown because of a yawning governmental information gap.</p> <p>The 21st Century Cures Act, passed by Congress with bipartisan votes in 2016, requires the Department of Justice to collect and publish data on how often federal, state and local officers use force, how many times that force ends up being fatal and how often the deceased had a mental illness. But the law doesn't require police departments to tell the DOJ how many people their officers killed.</p>

The FBI tries to collect the statistics, but for the first quarter of this year it estimated that only 40% of all sworn law enforcement agencies submitted use-of-force numbers. That figure is far below the participation level necessary to justify policy changes.

Arcadio's parents had sought mental health treatment for their 23-year-old son, but the system, such as it is, failed them. In the weeks before he was killed, they couldn't get him diagnosed or committed.

Across the country, in West Virginia, another system failure, another death.

Matt Jones was apparently suffering from a severe manic episode while standing on a highway with a handgun. Police were everywhere, sirens wailing. The scene on July 6 in the community of Bradley was captured by a bystander on video. One officer took a shot and then others opened fire, killing Jones in a hail of bullets.

The 36-year-old had been unable to get his medication refilled and was experiencing delusions and hallucinations, his fiancée, Dreamer Marquis, said.

"He desperately wanted help," Marquis said. "He knew that he needed the medication in order to live a normal life because he knew that he would have manic episodes that would get him in trouble."

Advocates for people with mental illness say it's clear they face greater risk of a police encounter resulting in their death.

Hannah Wesolowski, chief advocacy officer of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said the deaths of Castillo and Jones "highlight a larger systemic problem that we have in helping people who are struggling with their mental health or are in a mental health crisis."

Many communities lack a mental health crisis infrastructure, with nearly 130 million people in the United States living in an area with a shortage of mental health providers, she said.

"So when somebody might be acting out as a result of their symptoms, the only option often is to send police, and that can escalate the situation and lead to these tragic outcomes," she said. "I think we are failing people much earlier in the process because we're letting it get to the point of crisis."

The launch in July of 988, a national hotline for mental health emergencies, is an enormous step forward, she said.

"It's really spurring this development of a crisis system, but it's going to take years to get there," Wesolowski said. "I think we're closer to the starting line than the finish line of reimagining our crisis response in this country."

Nearly one in five U.S. adults has a mental illness, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Yet people with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed during a police encounter than other people approached by law enforcement, the Treatment Advocacy Center said in a 2015 report.

In Portland, Oregon, for example, 72% of the 85 people who were shot to death by police from 1975 to 2020 were affected by mental illness, drugs or alcohol, or some combination thereof, according to Jason Renaud of the Mental Health Association of Portland. The group does not have the numbers for those affected by mental illness alone, but sometimes they're intertwined. Long-term methamphetamine use, for instance, can cause psychosis.

In 2012, the federal government sued the city of Portland over the Portland Police Bureau's disproportionate use of violence against people with mental illness. But since then, use of force on the mentally impaired actually increased, according to an analysis presented in federal court.

Renaud said that of 25 people shot and killed by law enforcement officers from various agencies in the Portland metro area since 2012, every one was suffering from mental illness, substance-abuse disorders, or both.

Lt. Nathan Sheppard, a Portland Police Bureau spokesperson, said he couldn't confirm those numbers. He emphasized that all Portland police officers receive crisis intervention training. The department also established a unit to coordinate the response of law enforcement and the behavioral health system to people in crisis from mental illness and drug or alcohol addiction.

But Sheppard said more must be done to address what he described as a "public health emergency that has existed for decades in which services and treatment are not readily available or easily accessible for those in need of mental health treatment."

"There is need for more proactive, appropriate, individual-person-centered approaches to assisting persons with mental illness," Sheppard said.

A year after Arcadio Castillo III was killed by a police officer on July 9, 2021, his mother is suing the officer and the city of Salem in federal court for the failure to use crisis intervention tactics and training before resorting to deadly force.

A grand jury found the shooting was justified. The Marion County district attorney's office said Arcadio rushed towards the officer, who was not wearing a body camera, with a knife raised in a stabbing position.

"He never did that. He never rushed him," Arcadio's mother said as she stood over the spot in the living room where her son died after being hit by four bullets. She said the family "feels betrayed because a person who is supposed to serve and protect us in a time of crisis took away my child."

After symptoms of mental illness emerged in Arcadio's teens, Marion County mental health workers diagnosed him with attention deficit disorder and prescribed Ritalin, but the anxiety only got worse, his mother said. He began using drugs and alcohol to cope. A case worker at a psychiatric crisis center said she couldn't diagnose Arcadio because of the drug and alcohol use, according to Castillo.

Arcadio's parents tried to have him committed to a psychiatric institution, "but everywhere we turned we were told he wasn't sick enough to be committed," Castillo said. "And one week later he was killed."

"It was so frustrating to me because he just wasn't getting the right diagnosis, treatment, or medication that he desperately needed, and his anxiety kept getting worse and worse," she said.

Arcadio's ashes are kept in a teardrop-shaped blue urn on the mantelpiece in the family's rental house. His mother plans to have some of the remains placed in cremation necklaces for his loved ones.

A video of the West Virginia killing hit social media before Jones' loved ones were informed about his death.

Nicole Jones, his sister-in-law, was scrolling through Facebook when she clicked on a video that showed a man with red shoulder-length hair walking on a highway, pursued by at least eight police officers with guns drawn. The man held his arms above his head, a pistol in one hand as he backed away from the officers. He pointed the gun at his own head briefly.

Jones' heart dropped as she recognized the man's mannerisms — his walk, the way he flipped his hair over his shoulder with the shake of his head — and realized it was her husband's brother.

State police have concluded their investigation into the shooting and sent their report to Raleigh County Prosecuting Attorney Ben Hatfield, who will determine whether the deadly force was justified. Hatfield said Matt Jones had carjacked at least one vehicle at gunpoint shortly before he was shot.

He had been in and out of incarceration for almost two decades. His brother, Mark Jones, said it was clear to the family that Matt, who was a star baseball player and wrestler, struggled with mental health since childhood. His parents took him to counseling and tried to find a medication that would help.

Matt built a landscaping and tree removal company but was also getting in trouble — often DUIs or driving without a license. Most of his charges stemmed from violating probation, his family said.

In jail, Matt was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and placed on medication, which helped. But he got trapped in a cycle where he'd struggle to get care, experience a mental health crisis and get arrested again.

He lived for a while at his brother and sister-in-law's house in Culpeper, Virginia. Nicole Jones recalls him spending hours playing with her kids on a tire swing. But after a while he had trouble sleeping and said he was hearing voices. He asked her to help him schedule an appointment with a psychiatrist, but the counselor never called back.

Weeks before his death, Matt was running low on pills and broke down crying, his fiancée said.

Matt didn't have a driver's license. His social security card and birth certificate were elsewhere. That made it difficult to make medical appointments, Marquis said. They eventually went to a walk-in clinic that would tend to people without ID, but left after waiting for eight hours without being seen, she said.

Mark Jones was at work landscaping when he saw the video of his brother being shot.

"I was trying to understand, 'What was he thinking?'" he said. "What I keep coming back to is that he was lost and he really wanted help — not just one time, but his whole life."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/02 Tropical Storm Danielle strengthens
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/storms-hurricanes-weather-tropical-d5a345d308e37570636773c5cb7c6d6f
GIST	<p>MIAMI (AP) — Tropical Storm Danielle picked up strength in the Atlantic and was forecast to become the first hurricane of an unusually quiet storm season on Friday morning.</p> <p>The storm is not currently a threat to any land.</p> <p>The storm's maximum sustained winds were near 70 mph (110 kph). Additional strengthening is forecast, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.</p> <p>The storm is centered about 890 miles (1,435 kilometers) west of the Azores and is moving east near 3 mph (6 kph). The hurricane center said the storm is expected to meander in the Atlantic over the next few days.</p> <p>The tropical storm comes amid what had been a calm hurricane season. It is the first time since 1941 that the Atlantic has gone from July 3 to the end of August with no named storm, Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach had told The Associated Press earlier.</p> <p>In the north Pacific, Tropical Storm Javier formed overnight. Forecasters said that late Thursday it was 380 kilometers south-southwest of Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (65 kph).</p> <p>Javier is moving northwest at 10 mph (17 kph). It is expected to pick up speed and turn westward over the coming days.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Gas prices decline into Labor Day weekend
SOURCE	https://www.gasbuddy.com/go/labor-day-2022-2

GIST	<p>After a seemingly never ending spring of price-hikes at the pump, gas prices gas prices have declined every week of the summer and are expected to be the lowest since March 3 and 20% lower than on July 4, at \$3.79* per gallon. According to GasBuddy, the leading fuel savings platform saving American drivers the most money on gas, prices this Labor Day weekend will continue to fall slightly from summer highs, though remain over 60¢ per gallon more expensive than last year.</p> <p>Forecast to be the biggest travel summer since pandemic shutdowns in 2020, this year's soaring gas prices threw a wrench in to the road trip plans of many Americans. At the beginning of the summer, 58% of Americans responded to GasBuddy's survey that they intended to take road trip over the summer, with 33% to travel on Labor Day weekend. Though after months of price spikes and the national average topping \$5 per gallon, GasBuddy gasoline demand data, powered by its Pay with GasBuddy card, tells a new story.</p> <p>Gasoline demand on Independence Day weekend this year was notably lower than that of 2021, and the decline in gallons pumped in recent weeks advise that seasonal trends continue to push demand down for the unofficial close to the summer.</p> <p>"It was a dizzying time as gas prices surged ahead of summer, which caused many Americans to re-think their summer travel plans, only for the longest decline in gas prices since the pandemic to start providing meaningful relief," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy. "As the sun sets on summer, gas prices are in far more familiar territory and could continue to decline well into fall, barring major disruptions from hurricanes and the likes."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/02 China company profits collapsing
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/02/investing/china-worst-earnings-season-zero-covid-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>Hong Kong (CNN Business)China is suffering one of its worst earnings recessions on record as Beijing's zero-Covid policy and a real estate crisis take their toll on the country's listed companies.</p> <p>More than 4,800 Chinese companies listed in Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing have now released their earnings for the first half of the year. It was a bloodbath.</p> <p>As many as 53% posted a decline in net profit, according to data from Wind and Choice, two major financial information services in the country. That was almost as bad as 2020, when companies posted their worst earnings season on record as the country came to a near standstill during the initial coronavirus outbreak. Back then, 54% of listed companies saw their profit drop in the first six months.</p> <p>By another measure, though, the start of this year was worse. The number of companies reporting a loss hit a record high of nearly 900 in the first half. In 2020, about 780 lost money.</p> <p>An earnings crash in the world's second largest economy can ripple around the world. That's because Chinese companies are big buyers of commodities, technology and other products on the global market.</p> <p>"We've already seen the impact," said Alicia García Herrero, chief economist for Asia Pacific at Natixis, a French investment bank. Prices of oil and other energy commodities have retreated and semiconductor factories have started to see decelerating orders, she added.</p> <p>Experts blamed China's strict Covid curbs and a deepening crisis in the property market for the dismal performance of companies.</p> <p>"The key reasons are mobility restrictions and a huge drop in sentiment associated with the demise of the real estate market," said García-Herrero.</p>

Larry Hu, chief China economist for Macquarie Group, said the poor earnings reflected China's slowing economy, which was being dragged back by the real estate slump, the worsening Covid situation, and the weakening global economy.

China has so far stuck with its [zero-Covid policy](#), which often leads to strict restrictions on people's movement and [snap lockdowns](#) of cities over a few cases. Travel to and from China is also limited.

Shanghai, the country's financial hub of 25 million people, was placed under [a two-month lockdown](#) earlier this year. Since then, many other key cities have also tightened curbs on residents and businesses. On Thursday, Chengdu, a city southwestern Sichuan province, [locked down its 21 million residents](#) following a spike in Covid cases.

China's GDP expanded by just 0.4% in the second quarter from a year ago, the weakest performance since the start of 2020. Last month, several major investment banks slashed their forecasts for China's annual economic growth to 3% or less.

Analysts are also concerned about [a record heat wave](#) that has swept across southern China recently, which had caused some provinces to shut factories to save power.

"Whether Beijing decides to start easing [zero-Covid policy] from March 2023, we expect the economy and markets to experience a difficult period, as people will be either disappointed about no real opening or be overwhelmed by a surging Covid infection," said Nomura analysts in a research report on Friday.

Top losers

China's most prominent tech companies are among those suffering. The second quarter marked an end to years of explosive growth with Alibaba ([BABA](#)) [reporting flat revenue](#) for the April-to-June period. Tencent ([TCEHY](#)) [posted its first quarterly sales decline](#).

For some other sectors of the economy, this year has already been the worst on record.

Three of China's biggest airlines — Air China ([AIRYY](#)), China Southern Airlines ([ZNH](#)), and China Eastern Airlines ([CEA](#)) — posted record losses, with a combined loss of 50 billion yuan (\$7.2 billion) for the first half. They all blamed travel disruptions because of Covid curbs and a depreciating yuan, which has plunged 9% against the US dollar this year.

A weaker currency hurts China's airline industry because it has to pay for imported aircraft, parts and fuel in dollars. The costs of servicing dollar-denominated debt also increases.

Property developers are also among the worst performers so far this year, as the country's housing market has spiraled downward.

The sector, which accounts for as much as 30% of its GDP, has been crippled by a government campaign since 2020 to rein in reckless borrowing in the industry. Property prices have been falling, as have sales of new homes.

The crisis escalated in recent months, as thousands of disgruntled homebuyers threatened to stop paying their mortgages on unfinished homes, jolting markets and prompting businesses and authorities to take action to defuse the crisis.

Country Garden, China's No.1 developer by sales, reported a 96% plunge in net profit in the first half, the most since its 2007 listing in Hong Kong.

The company said it has been weighed down by "forces beyond our control such as resurgence of the pandemic in various parts of mainland China and extreme weather, coupled with the downturn in the property sector."

HEADLINE	09/02 India first homegrown aircraft carrier
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/02/asia/india-indigenous-aircraft-carrier-vikrant-commissioned-intl-hnk-ml/index.html
GIST	<p>New Delhi (CNN)India joined an elite league of the world's naval powers on Friday, when it commissioned its first domestically built aircraft carrier, the INS Vikrant.</p> <p>With the \$3 billion Vikrant, India will join only a small number of nations with more than one aircraft carrier or helicopter carrier in service and become only the third country, after the UK and China, to have commissioned a domestically built aircraft carrier in the past three years.</p> <p>The carrier has filled the nation with "new confidence," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at a ceremony marked by fanfare at the Cochin Shipyard in India's southern Kerala state.</p> <p>"The goal may be difficult. The challenges may be big. But when India makes up its mind, no goal is impossible," Modi said, before boarding the carrier and unfurling the country's new naval flag.</p> <p>"Till now, this type of aircraft carrier was made only by developed countries. Today, India by entering this league has taken one more step towards becoming a developed nation," Modi said, adding the Indo-Pacific region remained "a major security priority" for India.</p> <p>John Bradford, senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said India's commitment to the ship reflected its "long-term vision to maintaining a world-class naval force."</p> <p>"There are looming questions about the survivability of any carrier in the missile age, but major navies -- including those of the US, Japan, China and the UK -- are doubling down on their carrier investments. In this sense India is keeping in the race," Bradford said.</p> <p>Vikrant joins the carrier INS Vikramaditya, a refurbished Soviet-era carrier bought from Russia in 2004, in India's fleet.</p> <p>With a displacement of around 40,000 tons, the Vikrant is slightly smaller than the Vikramaditya and the carriers of the US, China and UK though it is larger than Japan's.</p> <p>But analysts praised its potential firepower.</p> <p>When its air wing becomes fully operational over the next few years, Vikrant will carry up to 30 aircraft, including MiG-29K fighter jets -- to be launched from its ski-ramp style deck -- and helicopters as well as defensive systems including surface-to-air missiles.</p> <p>Powered by four gas turbine engines, its top speed is estimated at 32 mph (52 kph) with a range of 8,600 miles (13,890 kilometers).</p> <p>"India is sending out the message that it has the power, it has the aircraft carriers and therefore the air power to dominate the distant reaches of the Indian Ocean," said Ajai Shukla, a former Indian military officer turned defense analyst.</p> <p>Analysts said the new carrier, and the destroyers and frigates that will eventually make up its strike group, gives India options further afield, too.</p> <p>"India can both influence and coordinate potential security solutions to regional concerns. Having an open ocean capability naval task group to contribute adds to India's clout and options. It needn't join in a multilateral response but can do so, or establish a separate independent presence, if it chooses," said Carl Schuster, a former US Navy captain who now teaches at Hawaii Pacific University.</p>

The new carrier will enable India to take a bigger role in military exercises by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or "Quad," an informal alliance of the United States, Japan, Australia and India.

For instance, the US and Japanese carriers have taken part in the annual Malabar exercises attended by Quad members.

Building Vikrant hasn't been easy for India.

The government signed off on its design and construction in 2003 and the keel was laid in February 2009. The ship was christened Vikrant -- which means "courageous" or "victorious" in Sanskrit -- and launched in August 2013.

But then delays set in: features needed to be redesigned, there was trouble securing aviation equipment from Russia, and then there was the Covid-19 pandemic.

Still, experts say India will be able to enhance its domestic shipbuilding capacity and learn from the experience.

"They now have the expertise to build the next carrier more quickly and probably with a better design," Schuster said.

The Indian Navy is considering building a second indigenous carrier. This remains in the concept phase but there has been speculation that any new carrier could be in the 65,000-ton range, about the size of the UK's HMS Queen Elizabeth or China's second carrier, the Shandong.

China is seen as India's main naval competitor in the region. With two carriers in service and a third far more advanced carrier launched in the past year, China is ahead of India both numerically and technologically, but analysts give India the edge in operational carrier experience.

The Indian Navy began operating aircraft carriers in 1961. Its first carrier, which it acquired from the UK, was also called Vikrant. The first Vikrant was retired in 1997. A second British-built carrier, INS Viraat, served in the Indian Navy for 30 years before its decommissioning in 2017.

China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, was an unfinished Soviet-era vessel that Beijing bought from Ukraine in 1998, updated and finally commissioned in 2012. Its first domestically built carrier, the Shandong, entered service in 2019 and in June 2022 it launched its third carrier, [Fujian](#) -- an advanced carrier with electromagnetic catapult-assisted launch systems, similar to those used by the US.

"On paper, China's new carriers have more capabilities in terms of payload and technology than Vikrant. However, India has decades of experience operating carrier aviation forces while China is still learning," said Bradford, the Singapore analyst.

Even with that experience it could take a year or much longer for Vikrant to get fully up to speed as a fighting force. That's typical for aircraft carriers. America's newest carrier, the USS Gerald Ford, was commissioned in 2017 and is only expected to have its first deployment later this year.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 National Preparedness Month: adjust plans
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/national-preparedness-month-with-every-disaster-comes-lessons-to-adjust-your-plan/
GIST	<p>Emergency managers. They are nimble, multitasking problem solvers. To be more effective, emergency managers need to avoid distractions to best focus on the job at hand.</p> <p>For many years I lived in Guam and Florida; I'm not new to hurricanes. I have been on the ground or in the proximity of 40 named storms, including a Category 5 super typhoon, and have worked post-landfall</p>

for another dozen storms. The most important lesson I have learned from this experience is that your own personal plan may be the most important element to you being effective as an emergency manager. When was the last time you reviewed and revised your personal hurricane plan?

“Make a plan, get a kit, be prepared.” You’ve heard it many times before, in multiple ways. I’ve said it myself on multiple occasions. But say it too many times and people become complacent. That complacency is dangerous, because with every storm comes new lessons. Some things I’ve learned through study, some through experience and some by observing challenges faced by others. You plan and prepare to deal with the things you know and can predict, and then you can apply your attention to the things you can’t predict. With all we know and all we don’t know, I’m still surprised to talk to people who were caught off guard, unprepared for what we know that we know.

During my three years in Guam, we experienced over a dozen named storms including Cat 5 Super-typhoon Paka in 1997. After each storm we made revisions in plans. After Paka, we rewrote nearly the whole plan.

During Hurricane Irma’s landfall in South Florida, I worked for the American Red Cross and was with our team at the Miami-Dade EOC. My wife and son were home about 150 miles away. We’ve done this drill many times before (and since) pretty much without incident. We had a plan and stocked supplies every year. I owned two generators and my wife was properly trained in their operation.

As Irma moved inland and closer to my house, I was focused on my work duties at the EOC and stayed in contact with my wife for updates. But focus was waning. As the power failed at home, phone service got erratic, but texts were mostly reliable. I texted my wife information of the rain bands I could see on radar and tracked the center of the storm as it came closer to my home. My wife would text me updates in the dark while she used every towel we owned to mop up water coming in through the doors, windows and in some cases through the walls. This was my distraction, my home and family.

A couple of days post-landfall, I went home and found myself waiting four hours in line at the gas station for fuel, hours in the heat repairing my house and debris removal followed by a cold shower and a night’s sleep without air conditioning.

After Irma, we adjusted our plan. Now is the time for you to do the same.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 National Insider Threat Awareness Month
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/ncsc-and-federal-partners-focus-on-counterintelligence-risk-in-digital-spaces-during-national-insider-threat-awareness-month-2022/
GIST	<p>The National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC), the National Insider Threat Task Force (NITTF), the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Intelligence and Security, the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, and the Department of Homeland Security today launched the fourth-annual “National Insider Threat Awareness Month” (NITAM).</p> <p>NITAM is an annual, month-long campaign during September to educate government and industry about the risks posed by insider threats and the role of insider threat programs. The campaign seeks to encourage government and private industry employees to recognize and report behaviors of concern, leading to early intervention and positive outcomes for at-risk individuals and reduced risks to organizations. To learn more about the campaign and resources available to organizations, visit the NITAM 2022 website.</p> <p>An insider threat is anyone with authorized access who wittingly or unwittingly harms an organization through their access. Most insider threats exhibit risky behavior prior to committing negative workplace events. If identified early, many insider threats can be mitigated before harm occurs. Federal insider threat programs are composed of multi-disciplinary teams that address insider threats while protecting privacy and civil liberties of the workforce, maximizing organizational trust, and ensuring positive work cultures that foster diversity and inclusion.</p>

Fostering Critical Thinking in Digital Spaces

This year's NITAM campaign focuses on the importance of critical thinking to help workforces guard against risk in digital spaces, which can facilitate insider threat activity. Such risk includes social engineering efforts; online solicitation by foreign or domestic threats; misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information; as well as malicious cyber tactics like phishing, smishing, and vishing.

With virtual work environments becoming more prevalent, malicious actors have more opportunities to target those in our workforces through exploitation of the digital information landscape. Government and industry employees are often susceptible to malicious digital approaches, posing enhanced risk to themselves and their organizations. The ability to spot and respond to manipulative information begins with critical thinking skills, which are essential to reducing vulnerability to these risks.

"Our trusted workforces (our insiders) are some of the most valuable assets in our nation, but they face an increasingly challenging risk environment," said NCSC Deputy Director Michael Orlando. "It is imperative that we arm our trusted insiders with the resources and skills to counter increasingly sophisticated efforts to exploit our personnel, information, and resources."

"Increasing the workforce's awareness of manipulated information and attempts at online social engineering is critical to ensuring our trusted workforce remains resilient and vigilant against these threats," said Ronald Moultrie, Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security.

Today, insider threat practitioners from across the U.S. Government and industry will participate in the [2022 Insider Threat Virtual Conference](#), hosted by the Department of Defense, to kick off the NITAM 2022 campaign. The 2022 Insider Threat Virtual Conference features senior level speakers and panelists who will present on critical thinking for the workforce, social engineering threats, an insider threat case study, and resources for workforce resiliency to counter insider risk.

Recent examples underscore the damage that can be caused by insider threats:

- In August 2022, a federal jury in California convicted Ahmad Abouammo, a former manager at Twitter, of acting as an unregistered agent of Saudi Arabia and other violations. Abouammo had used his position at Twitter to access, monitor, and convey the private information of Twitter users, including critics of the Saudi regime, to officials of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Royal family in exchange for bribes worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- In July 2022, a federal jury in New York convicted former CIA programmer Joshua Schulte of violations stemming from his theft and illegal dissemination of highly classified information. Harboring resentment toward CIA, the programmer had used his access at CIA to some of the country's most valuable intelligence-gathering cyber tools to covertly collect these materials and provide them to WikiLeaks, making them known to the public and to U.S. adversaries.
- In June 2022, civilian defense contractor Shapour Moinian pleaded guilty in California to federal charges, admitting that he acted as an unregistered agent of China and accepted money from Chinese government representatives to provide them aviation-related information from his U.S. intelligence community and defense contractor employers. An individual in China posing online as a job recruiter had contacted Moinian offering him a consulting opportunity. Moinian later traveled to China and other locations where he supplied US aviation information to individuals he knew were employed by or directed by the Chinese government in exchange for money.

It has been more than 10 years since Executive Order 13587 required all federal agencies with access to classified information to have their own insider threat prevention programs and directed the creation of the NITTF under the leadership of the Attorney General and the Director of National Intelligence.

NITTF is currently housed at NCSC. Since its inception, the NITTF has worked with federal agencies to build programs that deter, detect, and mitigate insider threats. NITTF and NCSC coordinate insider threat training and awareness; liaison and assistance; governance and advocacy; and research and analysis for

	stakeholders in the public and private sector to reduce the risk of insider threats to public health and safety, economic security, and national security.
Return to Top	Read more at ODN

HEADLINE	09/01 Companies struggle: influx of new workers
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/employment-jobs-labor-shortage-inexperienced-workers-11662041163?mod=hp_lead_pos13
GIST	<p>A United Airlines jet's wingtip clipped another jet earlier this summer after inexperienced ramp workers misjudged the distance between the aircraft. Some nurses are starting hospital jobs after graduating from school having never touched a live patient. Chipotle said sales at its restaurants are lower than they would be with more experienced staff.</p> <p>On paper, many companies' workforces are close to prepandemic strength or have even surpassed their early-2020 head count. In practice, companies are thrusting many workers into roles they aren't entirely ready for to satisfy demand for goods and services ranging from burritos to travel and healthcare.</p> <p>Companies have been laser-focused on filling job vacancies for most of the past year. They have raised wages, lowered barriers such as experience requirements and retooled hiring to make on-the-spot offers in an effort to reduce shortages that kept them from filling orders and keeping customers happy.</p> <p>Those efforts have helped the U.S. economy recoup the 22 million jobs lost early in the pandemic, reducing the unemployment rate to a half-century low of 3.5% in July. The Labor Department will report August employment data on Friday, and economists expect U.S. employers added another 318,000 jobs last month. That figure would represent a slowdown from the strong pace of job growth this year, but it would demonstrate that employers are still adding a historically high number of new hires.</p> <p>But unseasoned employees and the need for companies to allocate more veteran workers' time to training new hires have contributed to lower labor productivity in recent quarters, executives and economists say. "We've lost a whole generation of institutional knowledge in the pandemic," said Brynwood Partners Chief Executive Henk Hartong, whose private-equity firm owns Hometown Food Co. He has increased training in his factories, which make Pillsbury cake mixes and other foods.</p> <p>Companies are in the uncertain position of investing billions of dollars in hiring and training while the Federal Reserve is raising interest rates to reduce inflation. Many of the employees brought on in the hiring blitz of the past two years will be hitting their stride as demand for goods and services potentially slows.</p> <p>"We haven't had a case before where there's a global disruption to economic activity, but we boost demand to prevent a depression, and now we're trying to put the pieces back together," said Brad Hershbein, senior economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. "We don't have a precedent in the modern economy for how this works."</p> <p>Executives in some industries say hiring has exceeded training capacity. An increase in retirements during the pandemic and a rise in worker absences due to Covid-19 cases and summer vacations haven't helped. Executives also say new employees quit at higher rates than tenured workers, adding to turnover and demand for training. And many Americans are switching industries and careers, so more people are acclimating to new roles.</p> <p>Airline woes</p> <p>U.S. passenger airlines mostly stopped hiring during the pandemic and many encouraged thousands of employees to retire early, take buyouts or go on monthslong leaves of absence. Despite hiring tens of thousands of new workers in the past year and a half, airline executives have said they still don't have the staffing they need, disrupting service and thwarting plans to capture rising demand.</p>

Newer workers aren't yet as proficient at their jobs as the old hands who left during the pandemic, airline executives and union officials said. Some things, such as baggage handling, customer service calls and boarding, aren't going as smoothly as they once did, which has at times contributed to delays and lost luggage, some of them said.

Delta Air Lines Inc. Chief Executive Ed Bastian in October 2021 touted the potential "juniority benefit," lowering labor costs as new hires at the lower end of the pay scale replaced more experienced, highly paid workers who had left. But the process of spooling up with over 18,000 workers that were hired since the beginning of last year has proved to be complex.

Delta has restored about 95% of its head count but has been flying less than 85% of its prepandemic schedule, Mr. Bastian said during an earnings call in July. "You don't step into these jobs and you learn it overnight. There's a significant learning factor that we're also going through," he said.

JetBlue Airways Corp. has been adjusting training to account for troubles its new workers have had adjusting to things such as the airline's reservation system, President Joanna Geraghty said. "We're doing things that are focused on bridging that experience gap," she said, including offering employees with more seniority the chance to pick up additional time to help train new hires, or putting out additional training modules in areas where workers need more help getting up to speed.

In June, a tow tug was pushing a United Airlines jet back at Newark Liberty International Airport when the plane's winglet collided with the horizontal stabilizer on the tail of a United jet parked at an adjacent gate. Two relatively inexperienced "wing-walkers" guiding the plane misjudged the distance, said Michael Klemm, who leads the union representing United's ramp workers. "They made a mistake," he said, "but it's not a situation they should have been in alone."

A United Airlines Holdings Inc. spokesman said that since the incident, the airline has changed how it schedules shifts to ensure that new employees who move planes have appropriate support and oversight after initial training, including mentorship from more-experienced workers. The airline is also updating scheduling tools to give supervisors better information about a team's experience.

James Hardie Building Products Inc., which makes home siding and exterior building products, has hired more than 1,000 hourly manufacturing employees since the beginning of 2021 to keep up with housing demand, said Robert Scharringhausen, who leads U.S. hiring and recruiting. That has pushed its U.S. workforce to around 3,000 people at 11 plants, a period of unprecedented growth for the company, part of Ireland-based James Hardie Industries PLC.

With that volume of new hires, many of whom arrive from industries such as fast food, warehousing or logistics and with no manufacturing experience, the company said it doubled its orientation time to two weeks. New hires complete a combination of classroom training and "hands in pockets" observation—the new hires don't touch the equipment—of a veteran employee on the job.

The extended orientation made Jessica Dean's new job as a machine operator less intimidating, said the former fast-food worker who started at James Hardie's Prattville, Ala., plant last year. "It gave me a chance to open up and ask questions," said Ms. Dean, 21, "and not get thrown in the fire."

The company also shut down all of its facilities for a day last year to refresh all employees on safety rules and procedures. With plants filled with new people, management was noticing oversights during regular check-ins and walk-throughs, such as people failing to look both ways for forklifts, Mr. Scharringhausen said. "We stopped at a time when we can't get enough board out the door to keep up with orders," he said. The company factored the shutdown into its forecasts, he said.

James Hardie aims to get new employees working on their own 90 days after their start date, the same as before the pandemic, said Adam Graham, the plant manager at the Prattville facility, which is doubling in size this year. After their two-week orientation, workers shadow an experienced employee for four to 10 weeks. Then they are tested for proficiency by technical trainers whose primary job is to certify workers'

skills. If a crew includes many new hires, sometimes operators will run a machine slower than usual or will take extra time to walk the crew through a safety procedure such as a lockout, when a machine is shut off or restarted.

Productivity decline

The wave of new employees across the economy contributed to a decline in productivity in the first and second quarters, some economists say. U.S. nonfarm labor productivity—a measure of goods and services produced in the U.S. per hour worked—fell at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.1% in the second quarter from the prior quarter, the Labor Department said, after dropping 7.4% in the first quarter, the sharpest drop in 74 years.

“The new worker you hire won’t be as productive as a veteran employee,” said Upjohn Institute’s Mr. Hershbein. “And some veteran employees are getting reallocated to training new people, so that means they’re not generating more revenue right now.”

Some companies, including MGM International Resorts, have cut training time, at least temporarily. MGM shut down all of its casinos and hotel properties when the pandemic took hold in March 2020. When it began reopening a few months later, many of the staff it had furloughed had moved on to other jobs. Turnover and the return of travel also added to labor demand. In the past two years, MGM hired around 41,000 people, and more than 75% were new to the company rather than rehires.

To move people into their roles quicker soon after the reopenings, MGM condensed some of its on-the-job skills training for a short period, said Yonata Rubin, its head of talent. Supervisors who might have been managing an entire operation were sometimes redeployed for a few months to do nothing but train new hires. That put more strain on middle managers, Ms. Rubin said. “We were just training and training and training all the time,” she said. “You hire employees in, get them trained and onboarded, and then you’re hiring a whole new group the following week.”

Previously, a new hire was paired with one senior food server for the first two weeks of employment at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Now two hires will shadow a veteran, said Kendall Hart, the hotel’s director of food and beverage. MGM is also testing a virtual-reality training for new front-desk agents, in which they strap on a headset and advance through simulations with a lost or upset guest.

At Allegheny Health Networks, a system with 14 hospitals in western Pennsylvania, new nurses receive as much as 16 weeks of training before they can tend to patients on their own, compared with 12 weeks before the pandemic, said Claire Zangerle, the network’s chief nurse executive. That is because some still graduate from nursing school without having drawn blood or completed other basic tasks with a human patient, she said.

To protect students, hospital staff and patients during the pandemic’s first two years, nursing students—the largest source of nursing hires for Allegheny and many other hospital systems—couldn’t perform rotations inside hospitals, she said, so their instruction used mannequins. They started their jobs, she said, with less confidence and less experience than prior graduates.

“We have to adjust to their particular level of expertise,” Ms. Zangerle said. “There’s so much mobility right now in the labor market, people are switching professions, they’re trying new things, they’re leaving healthcare or coming into healthcare.”

Less realistic upfront schooling and less “at-the-elbow support,” she said, contributes to higher turnover among new nurses as they feel overwhelmed or realize they don’t enjoy the profession. First-year turnover is around 36% at the system, she said, up from 19% before the pandemic.

Restaurant training

Brinker International Inc., owner of Chili’s Grill and Bar, has been hiring many more people new to restaurant work than in the past, said Rick Badgley, its chief people and administrative officer. At the peak, Brinker was hiring 300 new workers a day on average for its 1,650 restaurants, he said. Each

	<p>restaurant position requires know-how, whether it's how a cook carries a knife or a server shoulders 34 pounds of food to a table.</p> <p>Brinker found new hires more likely than prepandemic to quit after about a month, Mr. Badgley said. "Newness is a killer to the guest experience," Mr. Badgley said. "It's been a massive challenge for us."</p> <p>Kevin Hochman, Brinker's incoming CEO, told investors last month that he is working on reducing complexity in the chain's restaurants to try to make its jobs less laborious. He pointed to hours workers spend portioning out shrimp or brisket before a customer orders it as time better spent elsewhere. "We're competitive in terms of wage rates," he said. "It's more about the actual work."</p> <p>Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc. executives said many new employees haven't worked in a busy restaurant with in-person and to-go dining during the pandemic. They said those workers need more training and experience in handling the volume of orders in a typical Chipotle restaurant.</p> <p>"A lot of these folks haven't experienced how fast the line can move," Chief Executive Brian Niccol told investors in July. "Folks think they're moving pretty quick when in fact we can be moving a lot faster."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Firefighters face mental health struggles
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/wildland-firefighters-face-mental-health-struggles-with-little-support-11662040800?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	<p>As fire seasons have grown more severe across the West, the federal agencies that battle the blazes are facing another problem: a workforce struggling with stress, anxiety and addiction, and not enough mental-health support to help.</p> <p>One wildland fire official said she spent hours on the phone trying to keep a colleague from shooting himself. A smoke jumper found a co-worker barely conscious after a drinking binge. A retired firefighter had three friends die by suicide in four years.</p> <p>Examples such as these are increasingly common, according to current and former wildland firefighters. They say they have struggled to get assistance, citing problems accessing counselors and restrictions on how much support they can receive.</p> <p>Some smoke jumpers, among the most elite wildland firefighters, wear stickers on their helmets with the names of colleagues who died by suicide, a current smokejumper said.</p> <p>Top federal fire officials acknowledge shortcomings in mental health support and say they are ramping up services. This week, the U.S. Interior Department expanded a counseling program for its federal firefighters, one of several new efforts to improve psychological assistance.</p> <p>"There's a crystal clear awareness that this is urgent," said Jeff Rupert, director of the Office of Wildland Fire, which oversees wildfire budgets and policies for the Interior Department's agencies. "We also have an understanding that there's much more we can do."</p> <p>The Interior Department and U.S. Forest Service are responsible for federal wildfire management and currently have several hundred unfilled fire personnel positions. Some firefighters said they left their jobs early due partly to increased burnout and stress.</p> <p>In 2018, Patricia O'Brien, a clinical psychologist and a former elite firefighter, conducted a survey of 2,625 current and former wildland firefighters. Twenty percent of the participants reported having suicidal thoughts during the previous year and 57% said they had engaged in binge drinking over the past month.</p> <p>Dr. O'Brien, who leads a mental health response program for the Bureau of Land Management, said federal agencies now recognize they need to address the problem.</p>

“Unfortunately, that recognition comes from terrible losses and negative outcomes,” said Dr. O’Brien, who spoke to The Wall Street Journal in her personal capacity, not as an agency employee.

The problem has become more acute for the roughly 16,000 firefighters employed by the Interior Department and Forest Service. An average of 7.4 million acres has burned each year over the past decade, up from 3.4 million annually in the 1990s, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Crews are enduring longer deployments as they combat [more destructive fires](#) that [behave less predictably](#). Wildland firefighters said the transition back home has become more jarring. Some said it shattered relationships. Others turned to substance abuse.

While stationed at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, Nelda St. Clair, a veteran wildland firefighter, said she compiled unofficial estimates of 17 to 22 suicides of federal firefighters a year between 2015 and 2018. Ms. St. Clair, who has helped develop mental health support programs for the Interior Department, said despite improvements, federal agencies still had a limited understanding of what firefighters face.

Permanent wildland firefighters get six counseling sessions annually for each type of issue under the federal government’s employee assistance program. They must pay for their own help once the sessions run out.

Until the Interior Department moved to include them this week, the department’s 1,400 temporary or seasonal firefighters didn’t get these services. The Forest Service this fiscal year also began offering its 3,623 seasonal firefighters the same counseling access as their permanent counterparts.

Wildland firefighters say the federal assistance program hasn’t worked well. Some reported waiting weeks to speak with a counselor. They said available therapists have little experience treating first responders and there was no guarantee of getting the same therapist again. Others simply gave up trying to reach anyone.

When Mike West sought counseling through the program after a smokejumper friend was killed during a fire in 2013, he was referred to a marriage counselor “who really didn’t know anything about trauma,” he said. The banality of home life between fire seasons added to the Forest Service firefighter’s anxiety.

“Little tasks like the washing machine going out can seem overwhelming,” he said. “I felt like the job was eating up my brain.”

In 2018, when Mr. West began suffering from nightmares and depression, he said, he was directed back to the same counselor. He said he ended up finding a trauma counselor in Reno, Nev., 90 miles away from his home in Susanville, Calif., and paying for it himself. Mr. West, 39, resigned in 2020 after nearly two decades, to become a schoolteacher.

Veteran wildland firefighter Brian Wandell called the federal hotline for mental health emergencies last year. A contract pilot he worked with had died by suicide, another firefighter he knew was seriously injured by a falling tree and Mr. Wandell had broken his back.

“I was, like, in tears. I just wanted to talk to someone,” he said. “But I couldn’t get anyone to help me.” Mr. Wandell said he ended up getting the number for a psychiatrist, but that didn’t help much. “None of these people know what a wildland fire is,” he said.

State agencies are seeing similar issues. Tim Edwards, who heads the firefighters union for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, said the number of calls to that agency’s mental health support program grew from 5,000 to 27,000 over the last 2½ years.

Compounding the problem: a national shortage of mental health practitioners. A Forest Service spokeswoman said firefighters are referred to mental health professionals who understand “the unique

	<p>aspects of trauma impacts for emergency responders,” and that new positions are being created to help meet the demand for help.</p> <p>The Interior Department said it is considering having therapists accompany wildland firefighters in the field to better understand their needs. This summer, the department allocated nearly \$2 million to create a new mental health program for firefighters focused on early intervention and trauma support services.</p> <p>Any improvements in services are too late for Joel Mendiola. Mr. Mendiola became a seasonal wildland firefighter for the National Park Service in 2017 after serving in the Marines. He was hired full time in November 2020, according to the Interior Department. His brother, Ben, said Mr. Mendiola told him that it was difficult accessing mental health services during fire season, and the psychological fatigue of long deployments wore on him.</p> <p>“There weren’t a lot of resources to decompress, which was one of his big complaints. The few times he told me that he did express something to one of his supervisors, they were kind of just like, ‘Hey, we’ll give you a phone number,’ and that’s about as far as it went,” Ben Mendiola said.</p> <p>Mr. Mendiola grew more depressed last year, his brother said. A knee injury made things worse. He left the Park Service in the middle of fire season, according to his brother, and was applying to the city fire department in Tucson, Ariz. He was seeking therapy through the local Veterans Affairs department, and trying to manage his knee pain, his brother said.</p> <p>On Dec. 10, 2021, Mr. Mendiola, 30, was found dead in his RV. The Pima County medical examiner ruled his death an accidental overdose from fentanyl and hydrocodone. His brother said it felt like he had fallen through the cracks.</p> <p>“I think if he’d gotten more help, a lot of the outcomes would have been different,” Ben Mendiola said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 Lightest WA wildfire season in decade
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3615391/kiro-newsradio-headlines-lightest-wildfire-season-for-wa-in-a-decade/
GIST	<p>Washington is seeing its lightest wildfire season in a decade.</p> <p>The wet, cool start to summer made a big difference.</p> <p>Our state’s public lands commissioner says new firefighting strategies are helping, as well.</p> <p>We’ve had approximately 10% of the land scorched this entire summer, as we did over Labor Day weekend in 2020.</p> <p>One of those fires leveled most of Malden in Eastern Washington and burning forests temporarily gave Western Washington the worst air quality in the world.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 Seatbelt use down, car fatality crashes up
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3615138/with-seatbelt-use-down-car-crash-fatalities-have-risen-20/
GIST	<p>According to a new federal government study, seatbelt use is down and fatality crashes are up, with the number of deaths involving people thrown from a vehicle rising by 20% nationally from 2019 to 2020.</p> <p>Traffic fatalities regardless of whether or not people were using seatbelts were up 7.2% in 2020 compared to 2019.</p> <p>According to Pemco Insurance spokesperson Allison Leep, “National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) fatality statistics, which compare 2021 to 2020, show deaths increased.” Here are the numbers:</p>

- 16% increase in multi-vehicle crashes
- 14% increase among drivers 65 and older
- 13% increase among pedestrians
- 13% increase in crashes involving at least one large truck.

Leep says that last year was the deadliest year on our roads in 16 years here in Washington state. The Pacific Northwest overall was much worse for traffic fatalities, which saw a 10.5% increase in 2021 compared to 2020. NHTSA released those numbers in spring 2022 and noted they were partially based on statistical projections.

KIRO Newsradio asked Leep why drivers aren't wearing their seatbelts, and she said the study finds that drivers are more than likely impaired and just don't buckle up.

She reminds everyone that driving is a team sport and to always buckle up when behind the wheel.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Ukraine pushes to retake occupied lands
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/01/ukraine-russia-kherson-military-offensive/
GIST	<p>KHERSON REGION, Ukraine — Ukraine's military has kept Ukrainians and the world guessing about the counteroffensive it claims to have launched in this Russian-occupied territory, but Oleksander Skovorodka already feels a shift.</p> <p>The 32-year-old resident of Kamyane, a village surrounded by Russian forces, said the pitch of artillery volleys from both directions has ramped up. He and his neighbors have watched Ukrainian attack helicopters buzz the treetops on their way south. On Wednesday evening, Ukrainian military vehicles plied the dirt lane in the region's northwest corner where he and his wife, Taisia, were driving on their way to buy food.</p> <p>"We can hear more fighting, more shelling," he said. "The Russians are just over there."</p> <p>The lane is one of the routes that lets them avoid areas controlled by the Russian invaders, who now occupy nearly all of this 11,000-square-mile strategically vital region, including its capital, the Black Sea port city of Kherson.</p> <p>The lane skirts forests and pastures and leads to a makeshift bridge of gravel and pipes across the Inhulets River, which divides Kherson from Ukrainian-controlled regions to the north and west. In recent days, Kherson residents have used the crossing to flee the fighting, most of them heading to the nearby city of Kryvyi Rih.</p> <p>"They cross every day," said Oleksander Pokusayev, who lives in the adjacent village of Shestirnya, just inside free Ukraine. He had ridden his Soviet-era Voskhod motorcycle to the Kherson side of the bridge, where he frequently fishes. "I saw two minibuses full of people earlier today," he said.</p> <p>With the only official crossing more than 100 miles to the north in Zaporizhzhia — an abandoned village where access is controlled by opposing armies at either end of a tense no man's land — evacuees increasingly must find other options. Some are swimming the Inhulets, which is what Pokusayev's sister-in-law did when she fled Russian occupiers in the village of Borozenske.</p> <p>"She had to walk through forests for two days. She swam across and Ukrainian soldiers helped her to safety," he said. "Her husband is still in the occupied side."</p> <p>As he was talking, a Ukrainian patrol came along, stopping to check on the safety of four Washington Post journalists. Because of the offensive, and increasing maneuvers by both sides, the Ukrainian soldiers said the Kherson side of the river was increasingly unsafe.</p>

“It’s very risky here now,” said one soldier, who asked not to be identified by name or unit. “The Russians are very close and their weapons are not very precise. Their rockets can go anywhere.”

Kherson was the first strategically important city captured by Russia at the start of the invasion in late February, and the broader Kherson region helps form Russian President Vladimir Putin’s coveted “land bridge” to Crimea, which Russia invaded and annexed in 2014.

Residents of the area have seen control of villages in Kherson swing back and forth. After Russians seized many of the communities in the early weeks of the invasion, Ukrainian forces pushed across the Inhulets in May, liberating several of them. Ukrainian troops used Pokusayev’s village as a base for more than a month of shelling in advance of that push.

Now, residents hope the new offensive will push the Russians out of artillery range. So far, however, the shelling has only worsened.

“They still hit a lot of houses; they try to hit the church,” he said, pointing at the gold dome visible across the river. “My house has been shot twice.”

For months, Western intelligence and military analysts have said Ukraine was preparing a major campaign to retake Kherson and the surrounding territory. The regional capital, a gateway between the Dnieper River and the Black Sea, is a major economic hub.

Ukraine hopes that retaking the region from the Russians — who were reportedly planning to stage a referendum in advance of annexing it as part of Russia — will swing momentum its way in what has become a stalemated war.

It is unclear whether the operation launched Monday is the predicted large-scale campaign.

Information from inside Kherson has been scarce. Military officials have barred reporters from accessing front-line areas across the country through at least Monday, a level of restrictions unprecedented in the six months since the start of the Russian onslaught. They have asked Ukrainians to be patient and warned that operational security means information about the campaign will be slow to emerge.

“It’s going to take as long as needed and nobody is going to rush it because people expect something dramatic and exciting,” said Andriy Zagorodnyuk, a former Ukrainian defense minister who now runs the Center for Defense Strategies, a military think tank in Kyiv. “They’re going to be doing it safely, whatever time it takes,” Zagorodnyuk said.

Ukrainian officials said “tough battles” were raging within the region and that their forces had destroyed numerous weapons depots and command posts. At the beginning of the campaign, Ukraine said it demolished major bridges across the Dnieper, cutting Russian supply routes.

Russia has acknowledged that a major campaign is underway but said that it has already had a heavy toll in Ukrainian lives, tanks and equipment. Wounded soldiers have reportedly begun to arrive in Mykolaiv, a coastal city just outside the region’s western border.

A Pentagon official on Monday verified an “uptick” in fighting inside Kherson, including artillery and rocket attacks, but could not confirm that a major counteroffensive was underway.

The information vacuum has left Kherson residents in and out of the territory scrambling to find out more. In Kryvyi Rih, where the city government has set up 89 shelters to house more than 35,000 evacuees from Kherson, people who fled the fighting scroll through Telegram channels and chat groups to find out what is happening at home.

	<p>Svetlana Kulybanych, 60, and her family are living in a Kryvyi Rih orphanage that has been converted into a shelter. She regularly phones one of the few friends who has remained in their home city of Nova Kakhovka, 25 miles from the city of Kherson.</p> <p>Something big is definitely happening, the friend reported Wednesday.</p> <p>“She said the Ukrainians are shelling in the city and they have destroyed a lot of depots and places where the Russians stored their equipment,” Kulybanych said. “Now the Russians are hiding between the buildings.”</p> <p>If this is Ukraine’s big push to expel the Russians, Kulybanych prays that the troops prevail soon. She and her husband, who is recovering from a heart attack he suffered on the day of the invasion, want to go home.</p> <p>“We want to start rebuilding while we are still young and strong enough to do it,” she said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 Summer of viruses: travel, warming trends
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2022/09/01/summer-viruses-covid-19-monkeypox-polio/
GIST	<p>In 13 years as an infectious-disease doctor in the suburbs of New York City, Azfar Chak has fought viruses, both routine and rare. But he had never experienced a summer of viruses like this one. No one had, at least not in this part of the world.</p> <p>A third year of the coronavirus, driven by a more contagious variant. Global outbreaks of monkeypox and a mysterious hepatitis afflicting previously healthy children. Polio virus found in the sewage systems in London and New York. And polio diagnosed in patients in Jerusalem and Rockland County where Chak works, a region of more than 300,000 people just north of New York City.</p> <p>The return of polio, one of the most feared diseases in the early 1950s, was particularly unnerving. In the 800-page medical review Chak read recently to prepare for recertification, he found “almost no mention of polio. Because we were under the impression that it was pretty much eradicated.”</p> <p>That’s how it’s gone in this summer of viruses, as new disease outbreaks became a source of deepening anxiety and even alarm.</p> <p>“Any prior narrative that we have somehow conquered infectious diseases through treatment and preventive measures hasn’t really come to pass,” said Jeremy Greene, who teaches the history of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. “The attention to covid-19 as a once-in-a-lifetime historical pandemic is itself already a wishful statement Many within the infectious-disease community have already been expecting some ‘Next’ to emerge.”</p> <p>In many respects, the viral invasion is no accident. A warming climate, vanishing forests and global travel have accelerated the spread of pathogens from animals to people, as well as among people in different parts of the world.</p> <p>The human population has doubled in the past 50 years to almost 8 billion, fueling the expansion of megacities and demand for land on which to build homes and raise crops and animals. The global land transformation has led to the annual loss of almost 25 million acres of forest, eroding a traditional border between the human and animal worlds, according to the United Nations.</p> <p>Closer contact with animals puts us in range of the pathogens they carry, which cause 60 percent of all human diseases.</p>

“We live in a world of microbial evolution and the microbes are taking every advantage they can,” said Michael Osterholm, the director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota.

On a deeper level, some experts suggest, we have demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of the positions humans and microbes occupy on the planet. The viruses were here long before we were, and they vastly outnumber us. Lay all viruses end to end, and “they would stretch for 100 million light-years,” according to an editorial in *Nature Reviews Microbiology*.

German virologist Karin Moelling put it this way: “We are the invaders of the viral world, not vice versa.”

The summer of 2022 may go down as the moment that humans began to get the picture. Infectious diseases became big news.

“It used to be that if one outbreak were reported, out of the hundred or so going on in Africa at any one time, that was quite something. But now, many more get reported,” said Jimmy Whitworth, a doctor specializing in infectious diseases, epidemiology and public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Western health authorities and media gave little attention to Nigeria’s monkeypox outbreak in 2017, though they have become more aggressive in searching out hazardous microbes in soil and sewage.

“One of the things that comes along with the increased attention that we’re paying to contagion is that we are looking at wastewater for all sorts of things now, including polio,” said Stephen Kissler, a postdoctoral fellow in the department of immunology and infectious diseases at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “We’re able to detect it in places where it might just have gone unnoticed before.”

Kissler said he believes that the high level of viral activity this summer “is partly just poor luck, in the same way that a bad storm is partly bad luck. But it’s bad luck painted over the top of this trend where we can start to expect these events more and more frequently.”

The trend scientists most often cite is the powerful influence of human behavior on the planet. A major turning point occurred in 2009 when for the first time, [more people were living in cities](#) than in rural areas, according to the United Nations.

The increase in city dwellers has led to the overburdening and polluting of [water](#) and sanitation systems, especially in poorer countries. Such conditions lay the groundwork for the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, which caused more than 820,000 infections and almost 10,000 deaths in Haiti following an earthquake in 2010. While cholera is caused by bacteria, water [transmits viruses](#) too, including hepatitis A and E viruses, rotaviruses, noroviruses and polioviruses.

Climate change is also driving the risk of infectious diseases. Writing last month in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, [researchers reported](#) that 58 percent of the 375 infectious diseases they examined “have been at some point aggravated by climatic hazards.” Only 16 percent of the diseases had at times diminished because of climate change.

While climate is bringing humans closer to animals, warmer temperatures are attracting insects and other carriers of disease to parts of the world that were once too cold for survival.

The Asian tiger mosquito’s “steady march northward,” carrying diseases such as chikungunya, Zika and dengue to new continents, is the classic example, Whitworth said. The mosquito, known formally as *Aedes albopictus*, was once found mostly in the tropical forests of Southeast Asia. But over [the past 50 years](#), it has spread to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and North and South America. The mosquito first appeared in the United States in the mid-1980s in tire dumps in Harris County, Tex.; it has since advanced across most of this country.

Much of the tiger mosquito's migration has been aided by the international trade in the 1 billion [used tires](#) generated each year. Old tires collect stagnant water, forming an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes.

Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine, said the summer's viral activity was the result of trends that have unfolded over the past decade.

"I think it's a confluence of climate change, global warming, altered rainfall patterns — but not climate change alone," he said. "I think it's happening in concert with ... war and political collapse, socio-economic declines — because poverty is such a dominant driver — aggressive urbanization, deforestation, and anti-vaccine activists and what I call anti-science aggression."

Gonzalo Moratorio, who heads the laboratory of experimental evolution of viruses at the Institut Pasteur de Montevideo in Uruguay, calls these factors, as well as human travel and dependence on animals for meat, "an explosive cocktail that is leading to these pandemic opportunities that we have been witnessing."

Although Uruguay's 83 percent vaccination rate against covid-19 surpasses those of the United States (68 percent) and the United Kingdom (75 percent), there remains vocal and even violent opposition to the shots. Moratorio said his house has been painted with anti-vaccine graffiti, and a year ago, he was attacked in the street by a stick-wielding vaccine opponent.

Part of the problem, he said, is that "vaccines did a great job and the success of that job is that there are people who do not know about the existence of these infections because they were close to being eradicated."

Eradication of an infectious disease is no easy task. The World Health Organization launched its effort to wipe out smallpox in 1959, and it finally declared victory on May 8, 1980, the sole successful elimination of a human infectious disease. A similar effort to end polio has taken more than 30 years and cost [\\$17 billion](#).

Given this summer's polio diagnosis of an unvaccinated Rockland County man who had recently traveled to Poland and Hungary, and detection of the virus in the sewage systems of two major cities, the effort to eradicate polio will be "much, much harder," Kissler said. "With infectious diseases, there's a huge difference between having none of it, and having a little bit of it."

World health leaders will not have the luxury of focusing on polio as long as covid-19 continues and other viral threats loom.

The measures taken to fight covid-19 — shutdowns, social distancing and mask-wearing — probably contributed to well-below-average deaths from more common viruses such as [influenza](#). As the population eases off these protections, however, viruses are returning to communities that now have lower levels of immunity.

"I think that's a very good explanation for what we saw with hepatitis," said Dean Blumberg, chief of infectious diseases at University of California at Davis Health, referring to this year's [global outbreak](#). "There was very little transmission during ... shutdowns, and as things open up, there's a kind of pent-up susceptibility."

Another virus he expressed concern about is [parechovirus](#), which has been circulating in the United States at least since spring. The virus can cause fever, an encephalitis-like syndrome and severe sepsis in newborns and young infants.

What worries Blumberg most, however, is measles, which he described as "one of the most infectious pathogens known to humankind." Measles can be serious and even fatal for small children.

“Even a small dip in population immunity can lead to widespread transmission,” he said. “So we’ve had that dip, and we have increased travel because of the easing of travel restrictions. And much of that travel will go to areas of the world where there are higher rates of measles transmission. I think it’s only a matter of time before there is more measles imported to the U.S.”

In Uruguay, Moratorio said he suspects the next threat may come from mayaro, a dengue-like illness carried by mosquitoes that are native to some of South America’s tropical forests, which “could have the potential to be the new Zika.” He said he hopes people have learned from the pandemic and additional viral activity this summer, “but I’m not sure the decision-makers have learned. Suddenly the market and inflation are the important things.”

Researchers said battling infectious diseases must become a global priority — one in which nations treat an outbreak in another country as their problem, too. They stress that wealthy nations must share vaccine doses with poorer countries to curb the spread of viruses before they travel halfway around the globe.

Hotez said that given the potential of pandemics to “collapse economies,” U.S. leaders must take the threat of epidemics as seriously as they take those of terrorism, nuclear weapons and cyberattacks. “We know from bat ecology studies all over the face of Asia and elsewhere that this is just the beginning,” he said. “We’re going to have covid-25 and covid-31 down the line.”

At Montefiore Nyack Hospital, Azfar Chak said he, his wife and their four children have all been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus. He holds out hope that “we will get back to a sense of normalcy as it was pre-covid,” though he adds, “some viral outbreaks are inevitable.”

Experience has taught him to expect surprises. A few years back, he and his colleagues dealt with a measles outbreak that sickened 312 people in Rockland County, most of them unvaccinated children — long after the World Health Organization had declared endemic transmission of the virus [eliminated from the United States](#).

In its declaration in 2000, WHO had included a note of caution: “Travelers continue to bring measles into the United States, and it can sometimes spread and cause outbreaks among people who are not vaccinated.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Pandemic erased math, reading progress
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/us/national-test-scores-math-reading-pandemic.html
GIST	<p>National test results released on Thursday showed in stark terms the pandemic’s devastating effects on American schoolchildren, with the performance of 9-year-olds in math and reading dropping to the levels from two decades ago.</p> <p>This year, for the first time since the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests began tracking student achievement in the 1970s, 9-year-olds lost ground in math, and scores in reading fell by the largest margin in more than 30 years.</p> <p>The declines spanned almost all races and income levels and were markedly worse for the lowest-performing students. While top performers in the 90th percentile showed a modest drop — three points in math — students in the bottom 10th percentile dropped by 12 points in math, four times the impact.</p> <p>“I was taken aback by the scope and the magnitude of the decline,” said Peggy G. Carr, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, the federal agency that administered the exam earlier this year. The tests were given to a national sample of 14,800 9-year-olds and were compared with the results of tests taken by the same age group in early 2020, just before the pandemic took hold in the United States.</p> <p>High and low performers had been diverging even before the pandemic, but now, “the students at the bottom are dropping faster,” Dr. Carr said.</p>

In math, Black students lost 13 points, compared with five points among white students, widening the gap between the two groups. Research has documented the profound effect school closures had on low-income students and on Black and Hispanic students, in part because their schools were more likely to continue remote learning for longer periods of time.

The declines in test scores mean that while many 9-year-olds can demonstrate partial understanding of what they are reading, fewer can infer a character's feelings from what they have read. In math, students may know simple arithmetic facts, but fewer can add fractions with common denominators.

The setbacks could have powerful consequences for a generation of children who must move beyond basics in elementary school to thrive later on.

"Student test scores, even starting in first, second and third grade, are really quite predictive of their success later in school, and their educational trajectories overall," said Susanna Loeb, the director of the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, which focuses on education inequality.

"The biggest reason to be concerned is the lower achievement of the lower-achieving kids," she added. Being so far behind, she said, could lead to disengagement in school, making it less likely that they graduate from high school or attend college.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is considered a gold standard in testing. Unlike state tests, it is standardized across the country, has remained consistent over time and makes no attempt to hold individual schools accountable for results, which experts believe makes it more reliable.

The test results offered a snapshot for just one age group: 9-year-olds, who are typically in third or fourth grade. (More results, for fourth graders and for eighth graders, will be released later this fall on a state-by-state level.)

"This is a test that can unabashedly speak to federal and state leaders in a cleareyed way about how much work we have to do," said Andrew Ho, a professor of education at Harvard and an expert on education testing who previously served on the board that oversees the exam.

Over time, scores in reading, and especially math, have generally trended upward or held steady since the test was first administered in the early 1970s. That included a period of strong progress from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s.

But over the last decade or so, student scores had leveled off rather than gained, while gaps widened between low- and high-performing students.

Then came the pandemic, which shuttered schools across the country almost overnight. Teachers taught lessons over Zoom, and students sat at home, struggling to learn online.

In some parts of the country, the worst of the disruptions were short lived, with schools reopening that fall. But in other areas, particularly in big cities with large populations of low-income students and students of color, schools remained closed for many months, and some did not fully reopen until last year.

The national tests, Dr. Ho said, tell the story of a "decade of progress," followed by a "decade of inequality" and then the "shock" of the pandemic, which came with a one-two punch.

"It erased the progress, and it exacerbated the inequality," Dr. Ho said. "Now we have our work cut out for us."

He estimated that losing one point on the national exam roughly translated to about three weeks of learning. That means a top-performing student who lost three points in math could catch up in as little as

nine weeks, while a low-performing student who lost 12 points would need 36 weeks, or almost nine months, to make up ground — and would still be significantly behind more advanced peers.

There are indications that students — fully back in school — have begun to learn at a normal pace once again, but experts say it will take more than the typical school day to make up gaps created by the pandemic.

The results should be a “rallying cry” to focus on getting students back on track, said Janice K. Jackson, who led the Chicago Public Schools until last year and is now a board member of Chiefs for Change, which represents state education and school district leaders. She called for the federal government to step up with big ideas, invoking the Marshall Plan, the American initiative to help rebuild Europe after World War II.

“That is how dramatic it is to me,” she said, adding that politicians, school leaders, teachers’ unions and parents would have to set aside the many disagreements that flared during the pandemic and come together to help students recover.

“No more of the arguments, and the back and forth and the vitriol and the finger pointing,” she said. “Everybody should be treating this like the crisis that it is.”

But solutions may be rather basic, if difficult to carry out. Martin West, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a member of the National Assessment Governing Board that oversees the test, said that low-performing students simply needed to spend more time learning, whether it was in the form of tutoring, extended school days or summer school.

The federal government has budgeted \$122 billion to help students recover, the largest single investment in American schools, and at least 20 percent of that money must be spent on academic catch-up. Yet some schools have had difficulty hiring teachers, let alone tutors, and others may need to spend far more than 20 percent of their money to close big gaps.

“I don’t see a silver bullet,” Dr. West said, “beyond finding a way to increase instructional time.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Climate threat to drinking water nationwide
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/us/mississippi-water-climate-change.html
GIST	<p>Flash floods, wildfires and hurricanes are easy to recognize as ravages of a fast-changing climate. But now, climate change has also emerged as a growing threat to clean, safe drinking water across the country.</p> <p>The deluge that knocked out a fraying water plant in Jackson, Miss., this week, depriving more than 150,000 people of drinking water, offered the latest example of how quickly America’s aging treatment plants and decades-old pipes can crumple under the shocks of a warming world.</p> <p>“There’s a crisis at hand,” said Mikhail V. Chester, a professor of civil, environmental and sustainable engineering at Arizona State University. “The climate is simply changing too fast, relative to how quickly we could change our infrastructure.”</p> <p>Earlier this summer, more than 25,000 people lost their water, some for weeks, after deadly floods ripped through eastern Kentucky, breaking water lines as they obliterated entire neighborhoods.</p> <p>Utility companies across Texas spent the summer coping with hundreds of water-main breaks as record heat baked and shifted the drought-stricken soil surrounding pipes. This came after a bitter winter storm that plunged Texas into freezing darkness in February 2021 and caused thousands of pipes to burst.</p>

And from the Gulf Coast to the East Coast, supercharged hurricanes like Harvey and Ida now regularly debilitate water suppliers, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to boil their water or scramble for bottles days or weeks after the storms pass.

This is on top of the slower-moving threats such as rising sea levels that can contaminate water supplies with saltwater, or a Western “mega-drought” that is withering reservoirs and parching the Colorado River that supplies water to some 40 million people.

President Biden made Jackson’s chronic water problems a centerpiece argument for the sprawling infrastructure bill he signed into law last fall. Money has only recently begun flowing to states and cities from that law, though, and Jackson’s share has been nowhere near the \$1 billion or more that city officials say is necessary to replace their system.

The infrastructure law pledged some \$50 billion for climate resilience — a lifeline for communities whose water systems were threatened by climate shocks. The money amounts to a political wager by Democrats that government spending can address decades of underinvestment and neglect that has fallen disproportionately on poor, minority-populated places like Jackson.

But the new law also reveals what experts describe as a weakness in how the federal government allocates such money. To be considered for grants, a city must be able to pay for specialized staff members who can assemble a competitive application. This poses a challenge for many smaller, poorer cities, which are often further at the mercy of state officials who decide which applications are sent up the chain.

In the past two years, Jackson has not applied for either of two federal climate-resilience programs that got big boosts in the infrastructure bill, according to data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

It was not clear whether Jackson had decided not to apply, or had sought to apply but was blocked by state officials. A spokeswoman for the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, which determines which applications get submitted for some federal grants, would not say whether Jackson had sought to apply for those grants, saying it required a formal public records request.

Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary, said on Wednesday that the State of Mississippi received \$75 million to upgrade drinking water systems across the state, with an additional \$429 million coming available over the next five years. But that money is in the hands of the state Legislature, not Jackson officials. The city has used more than \$20 million from Mr. Biden’s 2021 economic aid bill, the American Rescue Plan, to deal with water and sewer needs, she said. She also said there was nearly \$31 million available for the city to improve its water system through revolving loan funds of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Biden called Jackson’s mayor, Chokwe Antar Lumumba, on Wednesday to discuss the situation. A White House press aide told reporters that Mr. Biden “expressed his determination to provide federal support to address the immediate crisis and the longer term effort to rebuild Jackson’s water infrastructure.”

In Jackson, a majority Black city, water troubles have been exacerbated by decades of underinvestment, mismanagement and an exodus of residents to the suburbs, which leads to less money flowing to utilities.

“I’m taking my kids to friends’ and family members’ houses to bathe them,” said Brittany Smith, a waitress who said her water was brown when she went to shower this week. “I’m not keen to washing my dishes in it, either.”

The fragility of the city’s water system has been a problem in Jackson for decades. But the recent flood introduced a complication the city had never wrestled with before, as pumps were overwhelmed by the surge of water.

“As long as I’ve been in Jackson, that’s never happened before,” said Brian C. Grizzell, a city councilman.

“Our flood controls, our systems that are in place, are extremely antiquated,” Mr. Grizzell said. “We build more subdivisions, we build more businesses, and each time we build, that changes the landscape and it changes how water flows to where it’s supposed to.” Flood controls, he said, have not had the necessary upgrades to account for that.

Some experts said that billions more dollars were needed to overhaul 147,000 public-water supply systems across the country that were not designed to handle today’s extreme weather. Some cities have contemplated costly steps such as building desalination plants, or injecting treated wastewater into aquifers to keep seawater out.

“We don’t have enough money coming into our water systems to fundamentally change them,” said Allison Lassiter, an assistant professor in city and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania. “The infrastructure act just scratches the surface of what’s needed.”

Even in cities with the tax base needed to do that work, local officials are sometimes reluctant to raise enough revenue to fund it.

“The infrastructure to deliver that water is largely hidden,” said Ashlynn S. Stillwell, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. “Utilities have an idea how bad it is, but they might not have the large capital funds to do something about it.”

In cities like Jackson, those problems are further compounded by demographic and economic changes. A shrinking population means the costs of maintenance are spread across fewer ratepayers, increasing the pressure on officials to delay upgrades. And those residents who remain may have lower incomes, making it even harder to raise rates, Dr. Stillwell said.

Then, on top of all that, comes climate change, bringing more intense storms — weather catastrophes on a scale that drinking water infrastructure, along with every other part of a city’s infrastructure, was never designed to cope with, even if those water systems had been properly maintained.

In eastern Kentucky, 5,000 customers are still being asked to boil their water a month after flash floods tore through their towns. While water connections have been almost fully restored, about 80 customers still do not have water turned back on.

One of those houses in the community of River Caney belongs to Justina Salyers’s parents, whose living room and kitchen were gutted when floodwaters swamped their first floor. Her parents and their neighbors are using 275-gallon portable tanks to store water, and some are even trying to revive moldering old wells that have sat untouched for decades.

“They can’t flush the toilets. They can’t bathe. They’re working in dirt and mud, and they have no water,” Ms. Salyers said.

In the 90-person city of Buckhorn, Ky., Mayor Thomas Burns Jr. is among the residents still under a boil-water advisory, but he said people are just glad to have the taps back on. He said the floods did an estimated \$1 million in damage to the water systems — far more than Buckhorn could shoulder without state or federal help.

“We’ve ignored our infrastructure,” he said. “It’s scary. We take this thing about fresh water for granted.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Calif. climate vulnerable to global warming
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/us/california-climate-global-warming.html

<p>GIST</p>	<p>The allure of California has long been its almost unbelievably good weather: predictably dry summers and pleasant, if occasionally rainy, winters. Who wouldn't want to escape swampy heat for this temperate paradise?</p> <p>Our typically agreeable weather (current heat wave notwithstanding) is officially called a Mediterranean-type climate, defined as having cool, wet winters and dry, warm summers. Only five places in the world share this climate: California, Central Chile, southwestern Australia, South Africa and, of course, the Mediterranean Basin.</p> <p>"The California climate of having this several-month period of no rain that coincides with the hottest time of the year is globally really weird," said Anna Jacobsen, plant ecology professor at California State University, Bakersfield. "It's a really special and kind of unique climate cycle."</p> <p>The location of these five ecosystems is no accident. All are on the western edge of continents, between 30 and 45 degrees latitude, with a cold polar current running along the coast. Prevailing wind patterns and the cold current effectively prevent precipitation in the summer, the season when rainfall is most likely in the rest of the world.</p> <p>The desirable weather that results is not only a draw for humans, but also tends to foster a wide variety of plant and animal species. All five regions are recognized as global biodiversity hot spots, accounting for roughly 2 percent of the world's land area but nearly 20 percent of its plant species, said Dick Cameron, director of science for land and climate programs at the Nature Conservancy in California.</p> <p>California in particular, with its varied topography and microclimates, is home to more than 5,000 species of plants, roughly a quarter of which exist only within the state. "Plants far and away are our contribution to global biodiversity," Cameron told me.</p> <p>But the unique characteristics of Mediterranean-type climates also make them more susceptible to the impacts of global warming. Because California, for example, gets so much of its annual rainfall from a handful of storms in the winter, even small shifts in weather conditions can produce large effects.</p> <p>In other words, the very characteristics that make these climates famous (the rain-free summers) "predispose those regions to water scarcity," said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles. "If the storms don't occur during the wet season, you're screwed."</p> <p>Plus, increasingly warm weather exacerbates drought conditions by melting snowpacks and quickly evaporating water that's stored in lakes and the soil. California is currently in the midst of a historic drought, and South Africa, southwestern Australia and the Mediterranean Basin have all grappled with severe droughts in recent years too.</p> <p>These Mediterranean-type climate ecosystems were already dry places that global warming is making even drier, said Brandon Pratt, professor of biology at California State University, Bakersfield. He put it this way: "You're already on the margin and now you leave the margin and you jump off the cliff."</p> <p>That's adding up to worse fire seasons too, experts say. These regions have long experienced fires, and their landscapes are in many ways adapted to burn, Swain said.</p> <p>But the exceptionally parched land and warmer temperatures are fueling fires that become far more destructive than what's normal. "All of those places are places that have big issues with wildfire."</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	

HEADLINE	09/01 Extreme heat, wildfires pummel California
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/01/us/wildfires-heat-wave-california.html
GIST	LOS ANGELES — California's most intense heat wave so far this year has arrived, walloping residents with record-breaking temperatures, intensifying wildfires and stretching the state's electricity supplies.

On Wednesday, temperatures in San Fernando Valley communities north of Los Angeles reached new daily highs of 112 degrees, [according to the National Weather Service](#), while Lancaster, a city in the desert northeast of the city, tied a record of 109 degrees, set in 1948.

Across most of the state, [excessive heat warnings](#) were in effect.

Local officials also said that high temperatures and bone-dry conditions were making it difficult to fight the Route fire, which had burned more than 5,200 acres of brush-covered hillsides in the Castaic area of Los Angeles County, prompting evacuation orders and road closures. Crews had begun to contain the fire on Thursday, but seven firefighters had been treated for heat-related injuries, officials said.

Further south, the Border 32 fire had burned 4,246 acres east of San Diego, leading to evacuations and [forcing the closure of the Tecate Port of Entry](#) at the border with Mexico.

“At Barrett Lake, it’s 108 degrees right now, and firefighters are out there fighting this fire,” Nathan Fletcher, chairman of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, [said on Thursday](#).

For the second day in a row, the state’s grid operator on Thursday pleaded with Californians [to save energy from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.](#) — when the system is the most strained as residents rely on air-conditioners for relief and solar power begins to wane. More so-called flex alerts could come throughout the Labor Day weekend, the agency warned.

Some inland areas could experience even worse heat on Sunday and Monday, according to the National Weather Service. The [forecast for Paso Robles](#) in Central California shows temperatures reaching 115 degrees those days.

In anticipation, Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday declared a state of emergency meant to stave off blackouts as Californians began cranking up air-conditioners and fans. The order will formally permit power plants to shift into overdrive and allows the use of backup generators.

“While we are taking steps to get us through the immediate crisis, this reinforces the need for urgent action to end our dependence on fossil fuels that are destroying our climate and making these heat waves hotter and more common,” Mr. Newsom said in a statement.

Though California’s summer had been relatively mild, experts say this heat wave — which meteorologists have predicted will last for a full week — is just the latest manifestation of [climate change-driven trends](#).

Extreme heat has exacerbated the effects of the catastrophic [drought plaguing the West](#) by creating more dangerous wildfire conditions and reducing the state’s ability to generate hydroelectric power.

As a result of such compounding crises, leaders in California have for years been scrambling to [shore up utility systems not designed](#) for the duration, intensity or frequency of extreme heat.

Policymakers have tried to walk a fine line between tackling the root causes of climate change and addressing immediate emergencies.

Late on Wednesday, California lawmakers [approved a wave of aggressive climate](#) measures backed by the governor.

They also moved forward a plan to extend the life of the state’s last nuclear facility, the Diablo Canyon Power Plant, which was scheduled to close its reactors in 2024 and 2025. Mr. Newsom and other leaders have said the state needs the electricity it generates.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/1/chicago-mayor-lori-lightfoot-says-texas-is-racist/
GIST	<p>Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot lashed out at Texas after her city became the latest target for Gov. Greg Abbott's migrant busing campaign, calling the move "racist" but saying her city is ready to take the newcomers.</p> <p>She vowed to welcome the migrants and treat them better than the "racism, discrimination and human cruelty" she said they suffered in Texas, with offers of housing, food and "protection." Through a spokesperson, she blasted Mr. Abbott for forcing the situation onto her.</p> <p>"Texas Governor Greg Abbott is without any shame or humanity," the spokesperson said.</p> <p>Chicago becomes the latest Democratic-led city to be targeted by Mr. Abbott, who is intent on sharing the massive migrant surge with other parts of the country.</p> <p>The District of Columbia has received thousands of migrants since the busing campaign started in April.</p> <p>After New York Mayor Eric Adams griped that his city was struggling to handle a few thousand illegal immigrants in its homeless shelters, Mr. Abbott started shipping migrants to his city, too. He said it would give New Yorkers a sense of what Texans have been facing.</p> <p>In a statement Wednesday, Mr. Abbott signaled that he is targeting sanctuary cities, which restrict cooperation with federal immigration authorities. Some analysts say sanctuary cities act as magnets for illegal immigration.</p> <p>"Mayor Lightfoot loves to tout the responsibility of her city to welcome all regardless of legal status, and I look forward to seeing this responsibility in action as these migrants receive resources from a sanctuary city with the capacity to serve them," Mr. Abbott said.</p> <p>Mr. Adams and D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser complained about the newcomers, but Ms. Lightfoot seemed to take Mr. Abbott's challenge head-on.</p> <p>"This is such an important moment for Chicago as a city has been a sanctuary for thousands of newcomers. We are welcoming them and we will not turn our backs on those who need our help the most," her office said.</p> <p>The mayor also took swipes at the Trump administration.</p> <p>"We know that racism, discrimination, and human cruelty have played a pivotal role in how immigrants are received within our borders, and we are still working to recover from the previous presidential administration, which encouraged this behavior," the mayor's office said.</p> <p>Ms. Lightfoot's office called Mr. Abbott's busing policy "racist practices of expulsion."</p> <p>Since the busing program began in April, Texas has sent more than 7,000 illegal immigrants to other locations at state expense.</p> <p>Texas says it is taking illegal immigrants whom the Biden administration catches and releases onto its streets and putting them onto buses to go elsewhere. All migrants who board the buses do so voluntarily, Texas says.</p> <p>The Biden administration has lashed out at the governor, though it has sent conflicting messages.</p> <p>The White House initially mocked the busing campaign by saying the migrants likely would be heading to those destinations anyway and were going at Texas taxpayers' expense. The administration later complained that Texas was complicating the Homeland Security Department's ability to keep track of released migrants.</p>

HEADLINE	09/01 Plan: 3M 'civilian warriors' to defend Taiwan
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/02/taiwan-tycoon-to-fund-33m-strong-army-of-civilian-warriors-to-defend-against-invasion
GIST	<p>A Taiwanese tycoon has announced his plan to train 3.3 million “civilian warriors” and marksmen to defend Taiwan from a Chinese invasion, using one billion Taiwan dollars (\$32m) of his own money.</p> <p>The announcement by Robert Tsao, a well-known Taiwanese businessman and founder of United Microelectronics Corp, a major microchip producer, comes amid increasing military activity between Taiwan and China. On Thursday Taiwan’s defence ministry announced its soldiers had shot down a Chinese drone over Taiwan’s Kinmen islands.</p> <p>At a press conference on Thursday, Tsao, 75, said the Chinese Communist party (CCP) threat to Taiwan was growing. Wearing a bulletproof vest and helmet, he pledged funds to train “three million people in three years”. Working with the island’s civilian defence organisation, the Kuma Academy, 60% of the funds would go towards building an army of “warriors”, and 40% to training another 300,000 in how to shoot.</p> <p>“If we can successfully resist China’s ambitions, we not only will be able to safeguard our homeland but make a big contribution to the world situation and the development of civilisation,” he said.</p> <p>Tsao was formerly an active supporter of unifying Taiwan with China, and had renounced his Taiwanese citizenship in protest against a government investigation of his company. However, he told Radio Free Asia that he had a change of heart after witnessing the crackdown on Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement, particularly the Yuen Long MTR attack. On Thursday he also announced he had renounced his Singaporean citizenship and that his Taiwanese citizenship had been restored and he planned to “die in Taiwan and stand with its people”.</p> <p>“Given the Chinese Communist party’s record of atrocities against its own people and its brutal domination of those like the Uyghurs who are not even Chinese, the CCP’s threats have only ignited among the Taiwanese people a bitter hatred against this threatening enemy, and a shared determination to resist,” he said, according to Bloomberg.</p> <p>The Kuma Academy was established in 2021, amid growing desire from Taiwan’s civilian population to be trained in guerrilla warfare, self-defence and first-aid skills. In August it launched a crowdfunding drive, and was approached by Tsao.</p> <p>“This goal is ambitious and the challenge is daunting, but Taiwan has no time to hesitate,” the academy said in a statement.</p> <p>After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, community appetite for civilian training grew but was unanswered by the government, which has focused on building its armed and reservist troops. After moving away from a conscription-based armed forces, Taiwan has struggled to fill positions and maintain an adequate fighting force, which reportedly numbers fewer than 90,000.</p> <p>Citing the efforts of the British people in the second world war, and Ukrainians against the ongoing Russian invasion, Kuma Academy said the will of Taiwan’s people to resist an invasion would “determine the outcome of the war”.</p> <p>“War is not a matter for a few people, and defending Taiwan is for every Taiwanese. Everyone has the ability and responsibility to contribute their own strength in the war.”</p> <p>After the announcement, UMC distanced itself from Tsao, who retired from the company he founded more than 10 years. “He has nothing to do with UMC,” it said.</p>

	<p>Tensions between Taiwan and China have risen dramatically in recent months, particularly after a visit to Taiwan by the US House speaker, Nancy Pelosi. In response, China's military surrounded Taiwan with live-fire exercise drills that lasted for several days and included missile tests and multiple crossings of the median line – an unofficial border in the Taiwan Strait which China's government has recently rejected.</p> <p>Taiwan's defence ministry on Thursday said its soldiers had shot down a Chinese drone for the first time. The drone had flown over military posts on Taiwan's Kinmen Islands, which sit just off the Chinese mainland, and ignored warnings to leave, the ministry said. Taiwan had previously shot flares at repeated drone flights during and after the post-Pelosi drills, but video footage from recent flights over the islands had shown Taiwanese soldiers throwing rocks, prompting some embarrassment.</p> <p>This week the defence force warned it would shoot down any drones that ignored warnings to leave the airspace, after President Tsai Ing-wen urged "strong countermeasures" against Chinese provocations.</p> <p>The Chinese drills largely simulated a blockade of Taiwan, interrupting air and sea traffic and impinging on key shipping ports, but on Friday Taiwan's defence ministry said China's military was also simulating attacks on US navy ships, aiming to prevent foreign forces from coming to Taiwan's aid in the event of an attack.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/02 Day 191 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/02/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-191-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expert team from the United Nations nuclear agency plan to stay at the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant after gaining long-awaited access to the site on Thursday. "We are not going anywhere. The IAEA is now there, it is at the plant and it is not moving – it's going to stay there," the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, told reporters after returning to Ukrainian-held territory. He said a group of IAEA experts had stayed behind at the plant in south-eastern Ukraine and would provide an impartial, neutral and technically sound assessment of the situation. • The physical integrity of the Zaporizhzhia plant had been violated on several occasions, Rafael Grossi said. "It is obvious that the plant and physical integrity of the plant has been violated several times," he told reporters. "I worried, I worry and I will continue to be worried about the plant until we have a situation which is more stable, which is more predictable." • Russia's foreign minister warned Moldova that any actions seen as endangering the security of Russian troops in the breakaway region of Transnistria would be considered an attack on Russia. Sergei Lavrov said: "Everyone should understand that any action that would threaten the security of our troops [in Transnistria] would be considered under international law as an attack on Russia." • Russia and China launched large-scale military exercises involving several allied nations on Thursday, in a show of growing defence cooperation between Moscow and Beijing and a demonstration of Moscow's military might. The Russian defence ministry said the Vostok 2022 (East 2022) exercise would be held until Wednesday in Russia's far east and the Sea of Japan and involve more than 50,000 troops and 5,000 weapons units, including 140 aircraft and 60 warships. • United States federal agents searched properties linked to a billionaire Russian oligarch in Manhattan, the Hamptons and an exclusive Miami island. FBI agents and Homeland Security Investigations personnel searched the properties, linked to Viktor Vekselberg, who is a close ally of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and whose \$120m yacht was seized in April, NBC News reported. • Germany's domestic intelligence agency is investigating allegations that two senior civil servants could have been spying for Russia, according to a local media report. Die Zeit, which first revealed the case, said the officials being investigated had close involvement with energy supply issues and held key positions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A senior Russian oil executive has died after falling from the window of a Moscow hospital, months after his company criticised the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ravil Maganov, the chair of Lukoil, Russia's largest private oil company, "fell from a window at Central clinical hospital", the Interfax news agency reported on Thursday, citing a source. "He died from injuries sustained." Maganov is the second top Lukoil executive to die in mysterious circumstances in recent months. • Children returned to Ukrainian schools trashed by occupying Russian forces on Thursday. Only schools that are fit for use, are in areas that do not face a regular threat of shelling and that have enough students opt for in-person teaching will reopen. School administrations have been preparing for the new academic year by outfitting basements as shelters and training teachers on what to do in case of an attack. All children who attend are told to carry an emergency bag with a change of clothes, any medicine they may need, a note from their parents and, for the younger children, a favourite toy. • Russian forces have been forcibly transferring Ukrainian civilians to Russia or areas of Ukraine under their control, according to Human Rights Watch. Forced transfers were "a serious violation of the laws of war that constitute war crimes and potential crimes against humanity", it said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/02 IAEA: physical integrity of plant 'violated'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/02/ukraine-zaporizhzhia-power-plant-physical-integrity-violated-un-nuclear-chief-says
GIST	<p>The "physical integrity" of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station in south-eastern Ukraine has been "violated", the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said, as he voiced his fears for the site.</p> <p>Rafael Grossi led a team of inspectors to the Russian-controlled plant that has been frequently shelled in recent weeks, raising fears of a nuclear incident.</p> <p>"It is obvious that the plant and physical integrity of the plant has been violated several times," Grossi told reporters after he returned with part of his team to the Ukrainian-controlled area on Thursday.</p> <p>"I worried, I worry and I will continue to be worried about the plant," he said, while adding that the situation was "more predictable" now.</p> <p>"We have spent there four or five hours. I have seen a lot, and I have my people there, we were able to tour the whole site," Grossi said about the long-anticipated inspection.</p> <p>He said that part of his 14-strong mission to the plant would stay at the facility "until Sunday or Monday, continuing with the assessment".</p> <p>"We are not going anywhere. The IAEA is now there, it is at the plant and it is not moving – it's going to stay there."</p> <p>Grossi said a group of IAEA experts had stayed behind at the plant and would provide an impartial, neutral and technically sound assessment of the situation.</p> <p>"We are going to continue presence there, some of my experts. We have a lot of work there, to do analysis of some technical aspects," Grossi said. The IAEA would assess physical damage to the plant, ensure its safety and security systems were functional and evaluate the conditions of the facility's staff, he said.</p> <p>A report would be produced on their findings, Grossi added.</p>

The UN nuclear chief did not specify how many people would be staying at the facility, adding: “We could draw up a number of questions and initial observations, initial assessments, and they are going to dig deeper into that so that we could have a report.”

The Ukrainian energy minister, German Galushchenko, said on Thursday it was being discussed that certain IAEA specialists - “up to two individuals” - would be permanently stationed at the plant.

“But it is important for us that the station must be under national control, meaning that the station must be returned to the control of Ukraine,” he told Ukraine’s 1+1 television channel.

Describing said the security situation was “pretty difficult” during his visit. “There were moments where fire was obvious, heavy machine gun, artillery, mortars two or three times – we were very concerned.”

But he noted that the mission received “splendid support from the UN security team”.

“I think we showed that international community is there, could be there and we will be continuing this,” Grossi said.

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant – Europe’s largest nuclear facility – has faced repeated shelling in recent weeks, with Kyiv and Moscow blaming each other for the attacks, raising concerns of a possible disaster.

On Thursday, a dawn shelling attack on the area forced one of the plant’s six reactors to shut down.

Energoatom, Ukraine’s nuclear agency, said it was “the second time in 10 days” that Russian shelling had forced the closure of a reactor.

It said the plant’s emergency protection system kicked in shortly before 5am (2am GMT), shutting reactor five, with the attack damaging a back-up power supply.

In a video address late on Thursday, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, reiterated his frequent calls that all troops be removed from the plant.

“The main thing that must happen is the demilitarisation of the station’s territory,” he said. “Demilitarisation and full control of Ukrainian nuclear workers.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Dept. Commerce calls out Spokane Co.
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/homeless/washington-state-department-of-commerce-responds-quality-inn-catalyst-project/293-2524bff5-70c7-4bdb-8bde-b00daa74e2a1
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — The Washington State Department of Commerce has issued a statement providing additional background on the "Catalyst Project" for the Quality Inn on Sunset Boulevard.</p> <p>According to a press release, the department is aware of questions raised by nearby residents regarding the project. The also said Spokane's homeless problem has been obvious for some time.</p> <p>"A point in time count in 2020 found that 1,559 people were without permanent housing," Commerce Media Relations Manager Penny Thomas said in a release. "That number rose by 13% in 2022 to 1,757."</p> <p>The department also made reference to the protest back in December of 2021 that saw nearly 100 people experiencing homelessness set up tents near city hall. The homeless individuals protested the City's lack of shelter beds. Once the protestors were removed, they moved their tents to the WSDOT property near I-90 and Freya.</p> <p>"On May 24, Commerce made Mayor Woodward and Council President Beggs aware of available funding from the Legislature to help relocate Camp Hope residents to safer, supportive housing," Thomas said.</p>

	<p>"With these resources in mind, we urged them to meet and discuss their plan to help the unsheltered people of Camp Hope. Although our official Request for Proposal was issued in mid-June, and came with a 30 day deadline, our efforts to solicit a plan from the city had been going on for months."</p> <p>The department says they will continue to work with the City of Spokane, Catholic Charities and Empire Health Foundation to find alternative housing solutions for the hundreds of people living at the homeless encampment off I-90.</p> <p>However, the Department of Commerce did mention that West Hills residents have a "legitimate point" that their neighborhood should not have a disproportionate share of the facilities serving people who are formerly homeless.</p> <p>"Commerce would be responsive to additional housing solutions in other parts of the county proposed by local governments in Spokane County," Thomas said.</p> <p>Lastly, the department mentioned that it is "notable that Spokane County has declined to participate in this process."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/02 IAEA risky mission to assess nuclear plant
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/02/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#a-risky-mission-to-assess-the-imperiled-nuclear-plant-continues
GIST	<p>As five remaining inspectors from a U.N. watchdog agency continued assessing the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine on Friday, a day after making a risky and long-awaited trip to the imperiled facility, it remained unclear what steps the agency would be able to take to prevent fierce combat in the region from causing a nuclear catastrophe.</p> <p>The experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency said little on Thursday about their findings after about five hours at Zaporizhzhia, the largest nuclear plant in Europe. Rafael Mariano Grossi, the group's director, told reporters in brief remarks: "It is obvious that the plant and physical integrity of the plant have been violated several times."</p> <p>A spokesman for the agency has said that the team will present its findings at the agency's headquarters in Vienna by the end of the week. The five members who stayed behind, from the team of 14 who traveled there, are expected to keep working at the plant into the weekend.</p> <p>The I.A.E.A. visit represents the first time that independent monitors have been able to assess conditions at the plant. That is important because it remains unclear how much damage has been done to critical equipment since Russian forces first stormed the facility in early March.</p> <p>But whatever steps the team of inspectors conclude are necessary to ensure safety there, the agency is largely toothless in enforcing its recommendations.</p> <p>The viability of the inspections will also depend on how much access Russia is willing to provide in the middle of an information war between it and Ukraine over who is responsible for the precarious situation at the plant. Each side has blamed the other for shelling in the area which has raised the possibility of a nuclear accident.</p> <p>The agency's experts can offer an impartial glimpse of goings-on inside the plant, said Oleksandr Sukhodolya, an energy analyst at the National Institute of Strategic Studies in Kyiv. But that could mean little more than reinforcing the obvious: that fighting around it has emerged as among the gravest risks of environmental and health hazards of the war, he said.</p>

	<p>The agency can also help draw more attention to dangers that have already alarmed governments around the world, which might spur new sanctions against Russia, he said.</p> <p>The I.A.E.A has no authority to order a cease-fire or to demand the creation of a demilitarized zone — the two steps that outside experts say would provide the fastest way to limit the risk of a nuclear catastrophe. Russia has rejected both ideas.</p> <p>The U.N. agency is also not designed to investigate and assign blame for the shelling of the plant, which has six reactors.</p> <p>The mission that began on Thursday is expected to assess whether the so-called seven pillars of civilian nuclear safety — a list that includes the full functioning of backup systems and the guaranteed physical security of a power plant — are being met, said Ivan Plachkov, a former Ukrainian minister of energy. “The I.A.E.A. provides only information,” Mr. Plachkov said.</p> <p>The urgency of their mission was underscored even before the team set off into Russian-occupied territory.</p> <p>Hours earlier, shelling at the plant had forced the shutdown of one of two working reactors, and for the second time in less than two weeks, emergency diesel generators had to be switched on to keep the plant running safely, Ukrainian energy officials said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Gorbachev legacy: cautionary tale of power
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/world/europe/china-xi-gorbachev-russia.html
GIST	<p>In much of the West, Mikhail S. Gorbachev is hailed as the farsighted visionary who brought the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion. But for autocratic leaders in other parts of the world, his legacy stands as a cautionary tale of power discarded quickly and, by some estimates, cavalierly, with little or nothing in return.</p> <p>This lesson has been taken most to heart in China, where Xi Jinping is expected to be anointed to a third term as the country’s top leader during a Communist Party congress announced for October. The dissolution of the Soviet Union — and with it the birth of independent nations and the demise of an all-powerful political party — are precisely the kinds of political shock waves that Mr. Xi has committed his career to avoiding.</p> <p>China’s leaders “would regard everything the final leader of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. did as a textbook of how not to go about business,” said Kerry Brown, a political historian at King’s College London and author of books about Mr. Xi’s China.</p> <p>For a government terrified of the centrifugal forces that might spin away historically and ethnically distinct regions like Tibet or Xinjiang, the plethora of new nations carved out of what was once a single Soviet entity is particularly alarming. Mr. Xi’s government has cracked down on dissent across China, crushing pro-democracy forces in Hong Kong and overseeing the mass incarceration and forced sterilization of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.</p> <p>His government has also heightened the glorification of the Communist Party and of Mr. Xi himself, and formed an anti-Western partnership with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, who is determined to reverse what he has called the historical “catastrophe” wrought by Mr. Gorbachev.</p> <p>“The West might celebrate Gorbachev as a hero, but for the Communist Party in China his career was one crowned by failure, and the loud applause of the West only confirmed that,” Mr. Brown said.</p> <p>At a seminar in 2013 dedicated to encouraging the communist spirit among party stalwarts, Mr. Xi, himself the son of a party elder, called the collapse of the Soviet Union “a cautionary tale.” Study sessions for Communist cadres, which have increased in recent years, underline that message.</p>

“Finally, all it took was one quiet word from Gorbachev to declare the dissolution of the Soviet Communist Party, and a great party was gone,” Mr. Xi said, according to [a summary of the speech](#) quoted in Chinese state-run news media. “In the end nobody was a real man. Nobody came out to resist.”

Mr. Xi has styled himself as a strongman, eschewing the consensus-style leadership of his recent predecessors as head of the Chinese Communist Party, and establishing direct control of the People’s Liberation Army. A propaganda drive has [elevated an airbrushed vision of him](#) while diminishing the accomplishments of Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader whose market reforms catalyzed China’s integration into the global economy.

Even the slightest tendrils of dissent have been suppressed. And the coronavirus pandemic has given the Communist Party a rationale for closing China off from the world, shutting out foreign influences along with an airborne virus. Mr. Xi’s government has also [amplified Russian propaganda](#) about the invasion of Ukraine.

On Wednesday, the [United Nations human rights office released a report](#) saying that the Chinese government’s persecution of Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups “may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.” Last year, the State Department [called the repression of Uyghurs](#) and other Muslim groups in northwestern China a “genocide.”

“All of Xi’s efforts — ramping up ideological controls, reasserting Party dominance throughout state and society alike and pivoting Beijing back toward single-man rule — are aimed at steering China away from a similar fate” as the Soviet Union, said Carl Minzner, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of “End of an Era: How China’s Authoritarian Revival is Undermining Its Rise.”

Autocrats throughout the world drew similar conclusions, particularly in the former Soviet republics in Central Asia, where one-time apparatchiks refashioned themselves as absolute rulers in [Kazakhstan](#), [Uzbekistan](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Turkmenistan](#) and [Tajikistan](#).

The collapse of the Soviet Union was not the only result of Mr. Gorbachev’s glasnost and perestroika. As the Soviet Union weakened, socialist regimes around the world were starved of funding from their ideological patron. From Somalia to Nicaragua, Soviet-aligned leaders were tossed from office. (Some socialist governments later returned.) Other governments, like Cuba under Fidel Castro, survived but [fell into penury](#).

“The end of the Soviet Union also signified at the time Africa’s diminished geopolitical significance,” said Maxim Matusevich, a historian at Seton Hall University. “We now see the ambivalence of Gorbachev’s legacy in Africa reflected in the reluctance of some African leaders, a number of them educated in the U.S.S.R., to condemn unequivocally Putin’s war against Ukraine.”

The gradual end of proxy battles between Moscow and Washington allowed pro-democracy forces to eventually take hold, from the late 1980s into the early 2000s, in the place of long-ruling Western-backed authoritarians. In Africa, Daniel arap Moi [stepped down](#) in Kenya and Mobutu Sese Seko [yielded power](#) in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Asia, entrenched dictators like [Suharto](#) of Indonesia and [Ferdinand Marcos](#) of the Philippines, both of whom at one point drew American support for their anti-communist stances, were overthrown by popular movements.

But even among opponents to that generation of authoritarians, the last Soviet leader’s historical bequest is not uniformly celebrated, said Murithi Mutiga, program director for Africa for the International Crisis Group.

“Intellectuals on the continent, who favor a multipolar world, offer a less than enthusiastic appraisal of his legacy,” Mr. Mutiga said, referring to Africa, “because they believe the fall of the Soviet Union ushered in a period of unipolarity that was treated in what are viewed as arrogant ways by the West.”

	<p>In a different era in China, among another group of intellectuals, Mr. Gorbachev was received with greater enthusiasm. In the spring of 1989 in Beijing, university students and other pro-democracy forces poured onto Tiananmen Square. They danced to rock 'n' roll and made impassioned speeches calling for the Communist Party to reform.</p> <p>In May of that year, Mr. Gorbachev visited the Chinese capital, bringing with him a spotlight on the protesters gathered in Tiananmen. The students deemed him a symbol of reform, an example of a communist leader perhaps committed to compromise. On June 4, tanks rolled through Tiananmen. Hundreds, if not thousands, were killed.</p> <p>Chinese historians note that unlike the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China still exists, with a strong leader at its helm.</p> <p>Assessing Mr. Gorbachev's legacy, China's leaders see, "not a free Russia but one subject to poverty, chaos, corruption and, in the end, the aggressive nationalism of Putin today," Mr. Brown said.</p> <p>But some China-watchers wonder whether Mr. Xi's grip on power, with its attendant cult of personality harking back to the era of Mao Zedong, could lead to a similarly tumultuous future.</p> <p>"The sad irony is that the course Xi has selected now risks leading China directly back into the instability of its own Maoist past or that of Russia's present," Mr. Minzner said, "with national policies and politics veering wildly on the whim of a single leader."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 In Seattle, it's almost normal
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/travel/things-to-do-seattle.html
GIST	<p>On Feb. 9, 2020, the Seattle Asian Art Museum reopened after a three-year, \$56 million dollar renovation and expansion that transformed the look, feel and reach of the venerable institution. Five weeks later, the first round of statewide Covid lockdowns shuttered the place. "It was heartbreaking for me and my colleagues," said Foong Ping, the Foster Foundation Curator of Chinese Art at the museum. "It was shoulder to shoulder in the newly imagined galleries — then silence."</p> <p>This July, the museum, which reopened in May 2021, launched a new exhibition curated by Ms. Foong called "Beyond the Mountain," which showcases contemporary Chinese artists, including Zhang Huan, Yang Yongliang and Lam Tung Pang. It's a knockout show, with bold, tech-enhanced, multimedia works playing off traditional images and themes. And it's also a fitting symbol of Seattle in the aftermath of the pandemic. Ink Media #4, by Chen Shaoxiong, with its full-wall projections of drawings based on photos of political protests, is one of the most exhilarating works currently on view in the city, but museum hours remain limited to three days a week and the number of visitors has yet to reach prepandemic levels.</p> <p>In short, Seattle is back, but not all the way. The pandemic left gaps and tears in the urban fabric, especially downtown, and locals still mourn favorite restaurants that did not make it through: Boat Street Kitchen and Dahlia Lounge downtown, Il Corvo in Pioneer Square, the Paragon on Queen Anne Hill. But the city's defining cultural institutions remain healthy, new restaurants and coffee places are popping up all over town, and the communities ringing the center are more vibrant than ever.</p> <p>Capitol Hill makes a comeback Capitol Hill — the neighborhood where the Asian Art Museum stands on the crest of the Olmsted-Brothers-designed Volunteer Park — is a good example of the city's recovery.</p> <p>At the start of June 2020, less than a mile and a half south of the museum, the so-called CHOP (Capitol Hill Occupied Protest) transformed the neighborhood's commercial heart into a zone of fierce protest ignited by the murder of George Floyd. Protesters filled a local park with tents and murals, did their own policing after the local precinct was abandoned, and distributed free food, though by the end of the month a series of shootings in the area precipitated the clearing of the CHOP protesters. "At first it was</p>

beautiful,” says Pietro Borghesi of the action swirling around the Capitol Hill restaurant, [Osteria La Spiga](#), which he, and his wife, Sabrina Tinsley, own. “Then it became like the Wild West.”

But the CHOP had barely unraveled when new bars and restaurants began appearing on the site. The airy, plant-filled wine bar, [Light Sleeper](#), opened in 2020 in the courtyard of the stylish [Chophouse Row urban mini mall](#). Around the corner on East Union Street, [Overcast Coffee](#), touting “bikes, beers and coffee,” sprouted under the same roof as the [Metiér Seattle Bike Shop](#) (which also offers rentals).

Other bright new additions to Capitol Hill include Nasir Zubair’s [Karachi Cowboys](#) on 12th Avenue, with dishes fusing Pakistani street cuisine, Texas barbecue and soul food (try the keema, a simmered ground beef and veggie dish, \$17) and [MariPili Tapas Bar](#), a few blocks south on the site of the former Café Presse, featuring classics like patatas bravas (\$10), gazpacho (\$5) and polbo a fiera (poached octopus with crispy potatoes, \$20).

Ballard and the Central District, still on the rise

Another classic Seattle neighborhood, Ballard, north of downtown, where generations of Scandinavian fishermen resided, was flourishing prepandemic. The 2018 opening of the dazzling new home of the [National Nordic Museum](#), designed by the Seattle-based Mithun architecture firm, added new luster (and parking). Local culinary standbys like [San Fermo](#), [Sawyer](#) and [Indian Bistro](#) came through the pandemic in good shape, with outdoor seating options continuing, but there are some outstanding new additions. Ballard’s branch of [Spice Waala](#), a 10-minute walk from the museum, is a typical pandemic start-up: small, fast, nimble, focused on just a few zesty dishes to eat in or take out (aloo tikki fried potato roll, \$7.50; spicy chicken tikka roll, \$7.50; Masala aloo, fries with a twist, \$3.50). Need a shot? Refuel at [Papa Chango Café](#), a tiny, new, Miami-themed coffee place serving [Panther](#) coffee (café con leche, \$4.75; chocolate caliente, \$3.50), less than 10 minutes by foot from the museum.

Image

The Central District, Seattle’s historically Black neighborhood east of downtown, was gentrifying fast even before the pandemic — and if anything, the contested opening of the neighborhood’s Amazon Fresh supermarket in 2021 has intensified that trend. [Communion](#), Kristi Brown’s sumptuous soul food restaurant that started serving at the height of the pandemic, has turned the district into a dining destination. New twists on old favorites like watermelon salad with shaved onions and feta (\$14), grilled okra (\$14) and jambalaya (\$32) have sent critics swooning — and diners flocking. If you can’t score a dinner reservation, try lining up for Sunday brunch (cornbread French toast, \$24; hush puppies and grits, \$18). While you’re waiting, grab a Jebena-brewed Ethiopian coffee (\$4.50) at the four-month-old [Avole Coffee](#) next door, or a raspberry-ginger doughnut at [Raised Doughnuts and Cakes](#) across the street.

Farther south, in the emerging Hillman City neighborhood, [Archipelago](#) has been scoring high marks for its harmonious meldings of Northwest ingredients and Filipino cuisine.

Downtown’s “meaningful recovery”

There is no question that the pandemic hit Seattle’s downtown hard, and the area continues to struggle with homelessness, crime and vacant buildings (usage of downtown office space is still only 43 percent of what it was in 2019). It didn’t help that tourism fell off a cliff with total visitation (day trips and overnight stays) plunging to 22 million in 2020 from 41.9 million in 2019, before edging back up to 26.6 million last year.

But John Boesche, the senior vice president of tourism at Visit Seattle, reports that the city “finally saw meaningful recovery this spring and summer, fueled by pent-up demand.” Cruise ships are back with a vengeance; the Mariners, enjoying their best season in years, are drawing crowds to T Mobile Park south of downtown; and Pike Place Market is once again packed with pedestrians and sporting new restaurants, including [Maiz Tortilleria](#) for authentic Mexican street food and [Sugo Hand Roll Bar](#) for exquisite Japanese seafood and veggie wraps.

Even Pioneer Square — the city’s original downtown, with red brick Romanesque Revival buildings and pedestrian malls — which emptied precipitously during the pandemic, is getting a welcome new jolt of

energy because [of the ongoing waterfront development](#) following the removal of the elevated highway known as the Alaskan Way Viaduct. The new [Seattle Aquarium Ocean Pavilion](#), slated to open in 2024, will be the marquee structure on the reconfigured waterfront. Construction is also well along on a series of ramps, viewpoints and promenades linking both Pike Place and Pioneer Square with the shore of Puget Sound.

Phen Huang, the director of Pioneer Square's esteemed [Foster/White Gallery](#), notes that during the pandemic local galleries collaborated on remote art exhibitions like the Seattle Deconstructed Art Fair — in which 50-odd local galleries showcased the work of their leading artists online — and now in-person visits are ticking up. [First Thursday Art Walks](#) have once again begun to attract healthy crowds, and Foster/White is eagerly anticipating the Sept. 1 opening of a new show by the emerging ceramic sculptor Calvin Ma.

Pioneer Square favorites like Café Paloma and the London Plane have, happily, survived, and five months ago a promising Peruvian newcomer called [Señor Carbón Peruvian Cuisine](#) joined the depleted roster of local eateries. Lomo saltado (flap steak and fries, \$24) and pulpo à la Parrilla (grilled marinated octopus, \$26) are among the popular plates.

In May, the hipster-friendly Netherlands-based CitizenM hotel chain opened [a second Seattle location](#) in Pioneer Square to take advantage of the newly sweeping waterfront views (rooms from \$172).

Perhaps the neighborhood's quirkiest new addition is the penthouse apiary established in June at the pinnacle of Smith Tower, Seattle's first skyscraper. The honey is already being stirred and shaken into cocktails at the [tower's 35th floor bar and observatory](#).

Amazon, which has transformed the downtown South Lake Union neighborhood from a backwater of grubby light industry to a hive of tech employment and recreation, worked to keep area commerce alive during the pandemic, and the effort paid off. Now, right at the edge of the Amazon campus, there's the spiffy new tech-forward [Astra Hotel Seattle, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel](#), with a whimsical outer space vibe (rooms from \$279). Its sleek roof terrace bar is slated to blast off the first week of September.

Image

Just a couple of blocks to the south, the [Level South Lake Union](#) is another newcomer to the neighborhood, with clean, spare suites offering full kitchens and balconies. A climbing wall and indoor basketball court top the list of sporty amenities. The Level suite (the smallest unit) sleeps four, with rates starting at \$299.

Covid may have slowed Seattle's explosive growth and eased its congestion — but now traffic is back and so is the dynamism that has come to characterize this youthful, diverse, innovative and increasingly decentralized urban hub.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Updated boosters expected within days
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/health/covid-omicron-vaccines.html
GIST	<p>The director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday recommended that the vast majority of Americans receive an updated coronavirus booster shot, adding a critical new tool to the country's arsenal as it tries to blunt an expected wintertime surge of the virus.</p> <p>The decision cleared the way for health workers to begin giving people the redesigned shots within days. And it marked a milestone in the fight against a rapidly shape-shifting pathogen: For the first time in the pandemic, manufacturers have capitalized on the potential of mRNA technology to begin distributing a Covid vaccine that perfectly matches the circulating strain of the virus, a feat that had long seemed improbable.</p> <p>For all their promise, the arrival of updated boosters also adds another wrinkle to what is the country's most complicated vaccine. Vaccine recipients have already had to parse shifting eligibility rules and</p>

decide between brands. Now they face a weighty new question: how long to wait after their last vaccine dose or infection before seeking an updated booster.

In [authorizing the new boosters](#), federal regulators said on Wednesday that people needed to wait at least two months since their last Covid vaccine dose to receive an updated booster shot. Several members of a panel of expert advisers to the C.D.C. expressed concern during a meeting on Thursday that two months was too short, but the C.D.C. pushed to endorse the same minimum interval.

Immunologists said in interviews that waiting roughly four to six months after a last vaccine or infection would strengthen people's response to an updated vaccine, even if those scientists also saw the rationale for giving Americans flexibility in choosing when to seek a new shot.

The decision by the C.D.C. director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, mirrored a recommendation from the expert panel, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which on Thursday endorsed an updated booster for people as young as 12. People who have received a primary Covid vaccine series are eligible for that booster no matter how many additional doses they have gotten so far, C.D.C. scientists said.

Hundreds of thousands of updated vaccine doses were being delivered around the country on Thursday, the C.D.C. said. Providers nationwide are expected to have millions by Labor Day, the agency said, though some doctors have said they were told that initial supply would be small in their areas.

The new boosters are designed to generate immune responses to the original version of the coronavirus and to BA.5, the Omicron subvariant that is now dominant. Pfizer and BioNTech's shot was authorized for people as young as 12, and Moderna's for those 18 and older.

Exactly how much benefit the new boosters will offer over the existing shots is not clear. In a bid to catch up with the virus's evolution, regulators authorized them while relying heavily on human trials of a different updated shot, one that was reformulated to defend against the BA.1 subvariant of Omicron.

Moderna and Pfizer scientists on Thursday released their most detailed findings yet from studies of the latest BA.5 vaccines in mice. They found that those vaccines substantially increased immune responses to Omicron subvariants, including BA.5.

Moderna also deliberately infected mice with the BA.5 virus, and found that a BA.5 booster offered significantly better protection against infection in the lungs than the original vaccine did. The company's scientists argued that immune responses in mice had correlated with human immune responses in past studies.

Immunologists said they were confident that the new shots were the best available Covid boosters, and that they would put something of a damper on the outbreak this fall and winter.

Simply having updated vaccines by next week, rather than in mid-November, could save between roughly 7,500 and 18,000 lives by the spring, leading [epidemiologists have estimated](#).

"We're still seeing just under 500 deaths per day, which is putting us at about four times the level of yearly deaths we'll tolerate for influenza," said E. John Wherry, an immunologist at the University of Pennsylvania. "That's still an unacceptable level of death. I'm hopeful we'll make a dent in that because of updated boosters."

The reformulated shots will deliver the biggest benefits for older and more vulnerable Americans, scientists said. While the existing shots offer more durable protection against hospital admission and death than they do against infections, their effectiveness does also wane over time against severe outcomes, scientists said. That makes updated boosters a potentially important aid in surviving an infection, they said.

But it is often younger, healthier people who spread the virus to more vulnerable Americans, Dr. Wherry said. Even if those younger people are at relatively low risk of severe Covid themselves, scientists said, the updated boosters were likely to reduce their odds of getting infected in the first place and, in turn, spreading the virus to someone more vulnerable.

The higher levels of immunity generated by an updated booster could also decrease the likelihood of developing long Covid, said Shane Crotty, a virologist at the La Jolla Institute for Immunology.

“If people take these boosters, they’ll be better off, almost no matter what their situation is,” Dr. Crotty said. “If we can get as many people to take these boosters as possible, that will definitely reduce the number of cases this winter.”

But other scientists have expressed concerns that not enough evidence had yet been generated showing that updated boosters were an upgrade to the existing offerings. They have also worried that updated vaccines would give recipients a false sense of security.

“I understand that we need better vaccines,” Dr. Pablo Sánchez, a professor of pediatrics at Ohio State University and member of the C.D.C. panel, said during Thursday’s meeting. But he said that he was struggling “to make a recommendation for a vaccine that has not been studied in humans,” even if those human studies were ongoing. He was the only one of the 14-member panel to vote against recommending the updated vaccines.

Scientists said that serious adverse reactions had been very rare after booster doses, and that changes to the updated shots were so subtle that they would be highly unlikely to present new problems.

The success of the shots will depend in large part on how many Americans get them. The country’s vaccine machinery has been scaled back since the United States last offered booster shots to all adults, a result in part of congressional resistance to more pandemic response spending.

That has especially hurt efforts to give updated vaccines to marginalized and vulnerable Americans, some of the very people who face the greatest risks of being exposed to the virus and of becoming severely ill from it, epidemiologists said.

Many Americans seeking an updated booster shot this fall will have passed the four-to-six-month period that immunologists recommend waiting between doses, C.D.C. data showed. Older adults were only made eligible for their last booster shots this spring, but uptake was highest five months ago, during the early period of the rollout in April. Younger people were made eligible for their most recent boosters almost a year ago, and most of them are more than six months past their last shot, the C.D.C. said.

But millions of people have also recently gotten Covid. When it comes to the timing of future vaccine doses, those infections act like earlier vaccinations, scientists said, mitigating the benefits of getting a new booster shot shortly thereafter. Receiving a booster soon after an infection could also potentially raise the small risk, most prevalent in younger men, of post-vaccine heart problems, members of the C.D.C. panel said.

Federal guidance indicates that people should wait at least until their Covid symptoms have resolved before getting a booster shot, and that they may want to wait a full three months after an infection.

Some scientists said it was reasonable to want to give people flexibility about when to get an updated booster.

People may want to strengthen their immune defenses before partaking in an unusually high-risk activity. Others may have weakened immune systems that limited their responses to an earlier shot. An approaching case surge, especially this winter, could raise the risk of waiting. And the C.D.C. has urged health providers to offer people flu and Covid vaccines at the same visit.

	<p>Deepta Bhattacharya, an immunologist at the University of Arizona, said that C.D.C. recommendations could afford to space out doses of routine childhood vaccines at precisely the right intervals because children are unlikely to be exposed to those pathogens in the interim. That's not the case for the coronavirus, which is circulating so widely that someone leaving a long gap between doses faces higher odds of getting infected in the meantime.</p> <p>"Honestly, that's probably the more important factor to consider — what's happening in the real world — rather than in an ideal world of immunological optimization," Dr. Bhattacharya said.</p> <p>Still, he and other scientists said that waiting four to six months between doses would strengthen people's response to the updated boosters. That would help people steer clear of a situation in which their antibody levels were so high when they received an updated shot that their immune systems partly cleared out the vaccine before building strong defenses against new Omicron subvariants.</p> <p>"You can really only boost the responses after you've gotten below your ceiling," said Jenna Guthmiller, an immunologist at the University of Colorado. But, she said, "Without testing ourselves and figuring out what our ceilings are, which is very complex, the best option is honestly just to get the vaccine."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 What can UN IAEA inspectors accomplish?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/world/europe/with-war-raging-near-the-plant-what-can-the-un-inspectors-accomplish.html
GIST	<p>The urgency of the mission to a nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine caught in the middle of a raging war was underscored even before the team of international inspectors set off on Thursday morning into Russian occupied territory as artillery boomed in the distance.</p> <p>Only hours earlier, renewed shelling at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant had forced the shutdown of one of two working reactors, and for the second time in less than two weeks, emergency diesel generators had to be switched on to keep the plant running safely, Ukrainian energy officials said.</p> <p>Rafael Mariano Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency who led the team of inspectors, said the peril of the moment justified the risks of the journey.</p> <p>But even after the team safely reached the plant and gave it an initial four-hour inspection, it was far from clear what the mission could ultimately accomplish.</p> <p>The crisis at the plant is about a battle for control of the facility itself, now occupied by Russian forces but operated by Ukrainian engineers working under near daily bombardment.</p> <p>The agency has no authority to order a cease-fire or to demand the creation of a demilitarized zone — the two steps outside experts say would provide the fastest way to limit the risk of a nuclear catastrophe.</p> <p>Russia has rejected both ideas.</p> <p>The U.N. agency is also not designed to investigate and assign blame for the shelling of the plant. Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of shelling the sprawling plant, which has six reactors.</p> <p>Still, the visit was the first time independent monitors have been able to assess conditions at the plant — no small thing given that it remains far from clear how much damage has been done to critical equipment since Russian forces first stormed the facility in early March.</p> <p>The immediate checklist for the monitors, according to people familiar with the mission, was to ensure the plant's most critical emergency equipment is operational and in good working order. That included</p>

	<p>checking to see there were adequate supplies of fuel for the emergency diesel generators and sufficient reserves of high-quality water that can be reliably delivered to supply emergency pumps.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials wanted the I.A.E.A. to be allowed to keep monitors on site after the mission is complete, in the hopes their mere presence will create better conditions for the workers. Mr. Grossi, in brief remarks broadcast as he toured the facility, said five monitors would remain at the plant until at least Saturday. “We are establishing a continued presence from the I.A.E.A. here,” he told reporters.</p> <p>The Ukrainians also called on the I.A.E.A. to do a detailed study of all critical systems over at least a 24-hour period and release the results — a safeguard against what they fear will be coerced statements by workers at the plant speaking under Russian intimidation.</p> <p>Mr. Grossi has not said how his team will communicate their findings, but some experts hoped he would use the authority vested in the I.A.E.A. to increase pressure on Russia to cycle down all the reactors until the fighting ends.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 Oregon psychiatric hospital must cap stays
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/oregon-psychiatric-hospital-ordered-to-cap-stays-for-defendants/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A federal judge has ruled that the Oregon State Hospital must limit the amount of time it can hold patients charged with crimes, in a bid to create space at the overcrowded hospital for criminal defendants who need mental health treatment but are housed in jails.</p> <p>The psychiatric hospital in the state capital Salem doesn’t have enough personnel or enough space to add more beds but 73 defendants are currently in jail awaiting court-mandated mental health treatment before they can stand trial, according to court filings.</p> <p>The historic hospital — the setting for Ken Kesey’s acclaimed novel “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” and the location where the award-winning movie adaptation was filmed — has struggled for years with staffing and patient backlogs.</p> <p>Monday’s ruling by Senior U.S. District Judge Michael W. Mosman caps hospital stays at three months for people charged with a misdemeanor, six months for felony charges and a year for violent felonies including murder and rape. It seeks to speed up hospital discharges to make more beds available for incoming defendants who need treatment, but some prosecutors worry it will prematurely release patients who have yet to stand trial into communities not equipped to treat them.</p> <p>The situation in Oregon is emblematic of a nationwide crisis facing mental health hospitals.</p> <p>Staffing shortages in states from Arizona to Missouri to Michigan have forced providers to close psychiatric beds or entire mental health wards, diminishing the country’s capacity to treat patients in need of care.</p> <p>Aiming to address the issue, Michigan lawmakers in July approved a budget including \$325 million for a new state psychiatric facility and about \$58 million to create more beds at the state’s sole psychiatric hospital for children.</p> <p>In Oregon, this week’s decision came in response to a complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Portland by Disability Rights Oregon, an advocacy group, and Metropolitan Public Defender, a nonprofit criminal defense law firm. The two groups, citing a “constitutional crisis,” asked the court to take steps to enforce a previous federal court order requiring the hospital to admit defendants in a timely manner.</p> <p>The 2002 order, resulting from a lawsuit also filed by Disability Rights Oregon, mandated the state hospital admit defendants within seven days of being referred by a court.</p>

But the hospital in recent years has struggled to adhere to that admission period, and staffing shortages stemming from the coronavirus pandemic have made the situation worse. Defendants “suffering from acute mental illness” have spent months in jail in violation of that order, plaintiffs said in court filings last week.

Average wait times from early to mid-August stretched as long as 38 days, among the longest they have ever been.

“Their experience waiting in jail can be horrific,” said Jesse Merrithew, the attorney representing Metropolitan Public Defender. “As a result of their mental illnesses, they’re exhibiting behaviors that the jails will punish.”

Emily Cooper, legal director for Disability Rights Oregon, said this week’s ruling recognized “the value of individual patients’ lives and a court’s authority to enforce the constitution.”

The new limits on defendant hospital stays mean approximately 100 patients are now eligible for release, Oregon State Hospital spokesperson Amber Shoebridge said in an emailed statement.

Patients will be discharged gradually over the next six months and sent back to their home counties, where a court or community health provider will determine placement. Some may be transferred to local treatment centers while others may return to county jail, Shoebridge said.

The state hospital will give counties 30 days’ notice before a patient is discharged.

The hospital, which is overseen by the Oregon Health Authority, didn’t oppose the motion.

But three district attorneys from counties in the Portland suburbs and Salem say the decision threatens public safety and hurts victims.

Mosman granted their request to intervene in the case and gave them until January to monitor the release of defendants and the hospital’s admissions data.

Washington County District Attorney Kevin Barton told The Associated Press the ruling could spark a “cascade of unintended consequences.”

“When these people who are at the hospital hit those expiration dates of 90, 180 and 365 days, they just get released back to the counties with no real plan for what happens next,” said Barton, whose county includes affluent suburbs to the west of Portland.

Smaller, rural counties often lack the mental health resources that larger, urban counties can provide and might not be able adequately treat the patients being released into their communities, Barton said.

The plaintiffs’ request to cap defendant hospital stays at three, six or twelve months depending on the charges against them was based on a court-ordered review of the state hospital’s admissions.

The court last year appointed an independent expert to study the hospital’s capacity issues and recommend solutions. The expert report published in June estimated the caps could bring the hospital back into compliance with admissions wait times by February.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Downtown businesses pay street cleanup
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/downtown-seattle-businesses-pay-street-cleanup/281-c604ae50-766a-47be-88cc-3b3a91f12d92

GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Seattle businesses are funding the cleanup of several downtown streets to help kickstart recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Metropolitan Improvement District (MID) is adding 18 new cleaning trikes to their fleet. The trikes are to help clean team ambassadors get to issues quicker.</p> <p>Ambassadors clean up graffiti, trash of all kinds and hazardous materials. They often start clean-up early in the morning.</p> <p>In the last year, the team cleaned more than 1.4 million gallons of trash. The trikes were bought as part of the MID's \$15.5 million budget. "So each new trike costs about \$2,500 to \$3,000 dollars per trike," said Jennifer Casillas with Metropolitan Improvement District.</p> <p>All MID's services are funded by business owners. Sandy Lew-Hailer has been the Owner of Sandylew in Downtown Seattle for 14-years.</p> <p>"For about three years we called ourselves the urination destination," said Lew-Hailer. Her storefront looks far different these days. "They wash it down, including the sidewalk, it's a miracle."</p> <p>The team is filling a gap within the city to ensure tourists and locals feel welcome.</p> <p>"It's like a garden, it needs to look like somebody loves it. The whole city needs to feel like somebody loves it," said Lew-Hailer.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 School districts struggle to hire bus drivers
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/seattle-highline-school-districts-struggle-to-hire-enough-bus-drivers/281-9f3defc0-9bd2-4ed9-9286-80a4c9c66ee4
GIST	<p>BURIEN, Wash. — School districts are dealing with bus driver shortages. The nationwide issues is being felt in Western Washington.</p> <p>For Highline Public Schools, it meant some students were late for the first day of school. The delay only impacted one bus route. While it was a small disruption, the district says it does highlight why they would like to hire five to ten more drivers, but right now that is a challenge.</p> <p>Early this morning, some families received a text message alerting them that Route 113 was expected to be delayed 30 – 40 minutes due to staffing shortages.</p> <p>"It was just the one route that we knew was going to be significantly late," said Catherine Carbone Rogers, the Chief Communications Officer for Highline Public Schools.</p> <p>Rogers says it was just one route because last night the district learned they'd be short one driver.</p> <p>"We have enough to cover all our routes, but if anybody's absent, we don't have enough substitutes. And so, we really would like to hire more bus drivers," Rogers said.</p> <p>Highline Public Schools is not alone. The National Association for Pupil Transportation says the industry is dealing with a significant shortage of school bus drivers. Hop Skip Drive, a transportation company, says they surveyed a wide range of school transportation directors and 88-percent reported they have been constrained by the driver shortage.</p> <p>"It is an issue for us in certain markets as well. We have been very fortunate in Seattle that our team has done an excellent job in recruiting," said Scott Gulbransen, the Senior Director of Communications for First Student.</p>

	<p>First Student is one of the two companies that will be providing Seattle Public Schools with transportation this school year. Over the past 30 years First Student was responsible for all of the bus routes, but now there is a second provider, Zum.</p> <p>"They split it right down the middle between the two of us. It was 184 routes each," Gulbransen said.</p> <p>Zum needs to ramp up and hire drivers before taking on all 184 routes.</p> <p>"So we, in discussion with them, were asked to take on 78 of those routes," said Gulbransen.</p> <p>The temporary arrangement is expected to last through December. A Zum spokesperson said in a statement:</p> <p><i>Zum stands ready to get students to school as planned. Our contract was awarded in August with an expectation to ramp to 50% of SPS transportation by January 2023, and we are executing exactly on that plan. Zum is bringing a brand new bus fleet, hiring & training drivers, and introducing technology that makes rides safer for Seattle students and families.</i></p> <p>In the race to recruit new hires, Zum is offering incentives, and back in Burien, Highline Public Schools is doing the same.</p> <p>"We pay for their training and everything that they need to get the commercial certification," said Rogers.</p> <p>Highline Public Schools is accepting applications for drivers. On the district's website it says new hires can make about \$30 an hour.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 Port Angeles teachers' strike next week?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/port-angeles-teachers-plan-strike-next-week/281-5994efbd-4892-4dd5-b3a3-db802e9fe5b3
GIST	<p>PORT ANGELES, Wash. — After failing to reach a new agreement with the district, the Port Angeles Education Association called for a strike to begin Tuesday if a contract is not agreed upon in time.</p> <p>Educators will start the school year as planned Thursday, however, as negotiations between the two parties continue through the weekend.</p> <p>The union said smaller class sizes at all levels are its main priority.</p> <p>"I'm excited to start the school year with my new class of students," said Brandon Howard from Roosevelt Elementary School and PAEA vice president. "I hope we can avoid going out on strike on Tuesday. We deserve a contract that will ensure we can meet the needs of every one of our students."</p> <p>John Henry, Port Angeles EA president, said the two parties are in a "challenging" position as negotiations continue.</p> <p>"I never imagined back in February when we were prepared to bargain with the district that we would end up in such a challenging position," Henry said. "However, our union is unwilling to accept a contract that does not meet the needs of our students and staff."</p> <p>Port Angeles EA said its members have rallied behind its bargaining team, with a clear message.</p> <p>"Our working conditions are our student's learning conditions," the PAEA said in a release.</p> <p>The union is made up of 250 educators in the Port Angeles Public Schools. Port Angeles EA is affiliated with the statewide Washington Education Association and the National Education Association, which represent K-12 teachers, support staff and higher-education employees.</p>

	<p>Other teachers' unions around the state have also voted to authorize strikes during contract negotiations with school districts.</p> <p>The Kent School District has canceled the first day of school multiple times amid a teachers' strike, where teachers are bargaining for higher wages, lower class sizes and more manageable caseloads.</p> <p>The North Thurston Teacher's Union just reached a collective bargaining agreement with the school district after picketing last week over workloads and increased pay.</p> <p>The Seattle Education Association will vote on strike authorization this weekend.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Recall: Ford SUVs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/ford-recall-ford-expeditions-lincoln-navigators-heating-cooling-fans-can-catch-fire/507-b0afdb58-8109-4009-8aca-6d8079180d7d
GIST	<p>DETROIT — Ford is recalling nearly 200,000 large SUVs in the U.S. because the heating and cooling fan motors can fail and catch fire.</p> <p>The recall covers Ford Expeditions and Lincoln Navigators from the 2015 through 2017 model years.</p> <p>The Dearborn, Michigan, company says in government documents that it has reports of 25 fires caused by the motors, which are behind the glove box. Thirteen fires were limited to the blower motor area, while 12 involved extensive damage to the SUVs. Three fires damaged structures and one damaged another vehicle.</p> <p>One person reported injuries to their hand and fingers, and all fire reports indicated that the vehicles were running at the time of the incident, Ford said in documents posted Thursday by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.</p> <p>The company says it's not telling people to park the SUVs outdoors. It says some customers have reported inoperative fans, burning smells or smoke coming from the vents while the vehicle is on.</p> <p>Dealers will replace the front blower motor assembly at no cost to owners, who will be notified starting Sept. 12.</p> <p>It's the second recent recall for the Expedition and Navigator vehicles due to problems that can cause fires.</p> <p>In July, Ford expanded a May recall to 66,000 of the SUVs from the 2021 model year. The company told owners to park them outdoors due to a series of engine fires that could happen while the ignitions are off. Ford traced the cause to printed circuit boards that are susceptible to an electrical short.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Kent teachers' strike moves into 2nd week
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/kent-teacher-strike-moves-second-week-school-district/281-9365ea21-e49f-4081-adda-3ffd455402ee
GIST	<p>KENT, Wash. — It's been one week since teachers in the Kent School District went on strike. The teachers say the strike isn't just about money. They want to see smaller class sizes and more support for students.</p> <p>At the Night Market at Lake Desire Thursday night, among the music and crafts were teachers on day seven of their strike.</p> <p>"It's devastating. We're all ready. We have our classrooms ready," said Fairwood Elementary School teacher, Edyte Parsons.</p>

	<p>Parsons said for her classroom, the past two years have been hard.</p> <p>"I go home and I am so upset because I can't help them. I had four students threaten suicide last year, in fourth grade, and we didn't have anyone to go to. There was nobody," said Parsons.</p> <p>It's one reason the teacher's union, Kent Education Association, is calling on the Kent School District to make changes.</p> <p>"This is our rainy fund. These students are struggling. They're behind academically, socially they need help," said Parsons.</p> <p>Data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction says between now and September 2024 the Kent School District has over \$68 million in COVID relief money, known as ESSER, to spend. Teachers want to see some of that money put towards their request.</p> <p>The district also presented teachers with a 6.3 percent raise. 5.5 percent of the raise is considered a cost of living adjustment from the state. When it comes to the additional .8 percent increase, teachers say they'd be open to negotiating a smaller amount if it meant funding for more help.</p> <p>"My impression, from talking to so many teachers, top of mind isn't about the money. It's about other things like supporting students, mental health services, things like that," said former Kent School Board Member Michele Bettinger. She resigned from her position in June.</p> <p>Bettinger supports the teachers' cause, however, she acknowledged how complicated school funding can be.</p> <p>"You can't move the buckets of money around. Everything has to go to what it's earmarked for," said Bettinger.</p> <p>The district's website says it has used some ESSER funds to "pilot teletherapy services in response to the mental health care shortage and the difficulty of filling mental health vacancies."</p> <p>The district could choose to use its ESSER funds for several things. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has a list of 14 ways ESSER funds can be used. They include providing mental health services and support and addressing learning loss among students.</p> <p>Bettinger is surprised the strike has lasted this long. Parsons thinks despite efforts, she doesn't believe there has been much progress between the Kent School District and the Kent Education Association.</p> <p>"I really think it's going to take the parents because they're not listening to us, they're not listening to anybody. So maybe, it's going to take the parents standing up and saying it needs to stop," said Parsons.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 School districts eye safety improvements
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/parent-fights-security-changes-other-districts-make-safety-improvements/M6DFFIV6JRHXBGJAUD5UFJL42E/
GIST	<p>As thousands of students head back to school in Western Washington, some school districts are upgrading security, including Tacoma Public Schools, which is rolling out millions of dollars in upgrades.</p> <p>But 30 miles away, in Tahoma Public Schools, one parent is fighting for security changes across the district.</p> <p>"It used to be a really exciting thing to think about—oh, my child is going to be starting school, this is going to be such a great experience," Raime Rigby said. "Now, it's almost the opposite. It's really stressful."</p>

Rigby never thought she'd feel that way when her family moved to Maple Valley in 2020.

"I assumed that the doors at least would be locked for my child and that very basic safety precautions would already be in place... but they're not," she said.

She says she found out not all school building doors were locked when someone threatened a school there this March. Her daughter Brooklyn was in kindergarten at the time. She started speaking out and asking for change.

Then, tragedy in Uvalde just a couple of months later: a gunman entered an elementary school through an unlocked exterior door and gunned down 21 people, 19 of them children.

"My first thoughts obviously are all about the children themselves and the parents," Rigby said. "And then, when you think about, what does this mean for us? Initially, I thought, our school has to act now."

KIRO 7 asked the Tahoma School District about its policies and a spokesperson told us by email, "All perimeter doors and gates are locked at all times," but when reporter Linzi Sheldon asked about main entrances, the spokesperson wrote back, "We are respectfully going to refrain from commenting further on the specific security practices... We don't feel comfortable having potential vulnerabilities of our schools published."

KIRO 7 reached out to several districts nearby and our state's largest, Seattle Public Schools. KIRO 7 did not identify any specific school's security measures, only district policies.

Regarding locking doors, Auburn said it wasn't a required policy. In Fife and Kent, it's the case in most schools. In Sumner-Bonney Lake, it varies, but buzz-in upgrades are underway, while in Seattle Public Schools, locking is described as "recommended." A spokesperson wrote, "There can be some variance on how this guidance is applied in the variety of school buildings and campus layouts in our different communities." In Puyallup and Tacoma, it's 'yes' on locking. It's unclear in Tahoma Public Schools.

Many districts have a single entry point during school hours: Auburn, Puyallup, Sumner-Bonney Lake and Tacoma. It's the case for the majority of schools in Fife, while Kent and Seattle said it varies. Again, it's unclear in Tahoma.

Most districts have cameras on all campuses, except for Fife, which is upgrading some cameras, and Seattle, which said most schools have them.

Thirty miles southwest, Tacoma Public Schools Spokesperson Kathryn McCarthy said the district has added 900 new cameras as part of a \$28.7 million safety and security plan.

It comes from a \$535 million bond passed by Tacoma voters in 2020.

"The safety and security of our staff and students—there is no higher priority," McCarthy said. "No learning can happen if people aren't safe."

KIRO 7 obtained a list of district cameras and discovered upgrades were badly needed. Nearly 9% of them across the district weren't working, including dozens at Meeker Middle School.

"Meeker had 52 cameras and 41 of them were offline," reporter Linzi Sheldon said.

"Yeah, Meeker is a perfect example of why we needed upgraded camera systems in our schools," McCarthy said. "We have an old system where the cameras are worn out."

McCarthy said these upgraded cameras will allow them to share livestreams with police in an emergency, like an active shooter situation. She said they don't use facial recognition, but they can help track down

	<p>students based on what they were wearing. For example, if a student doesn't arrive home on time, the school can go back to cameras looking at the bus loop and see if they even got on the bus or got on the wrong bus.</p> <p>Tacoma parent Erin Hohman said she saw the district's locked door policy in action at Jefferson Elementary, where her children Claire and Jamie are students. But she said it wasn't enforced before Uvalde.</p> <p>"When I would pick them up for appointments or something, you could just walk in the front door," Hohman said.</p> <p>Tacoma Public Schools told KIRO 7 it will be reminding staff this year that doors must be locked.</p> <p>"We're still in the process of upgrading systems, but those front doors are going to be locked," McCarthy said, "and you're going to have to either ring a doorbell or use a buzz in system or use that vestibule system at every school."</p> <p>It's a fight Rigby said she isn't giving up in Tahoma Public Schools.</p> <p>"Now is the time to act," she said. "We cannot afford to wait. If something were to happen, it would be devastating."</p> <p>Rigby started a petition called "Lock and Secure Tahoma Schools," and in six days, it's gathered more than 400 signatures. Tahoma Public Schools said a school security expert will be evaluating the district's schools sometime in September.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 Rental rates skyrocket; pullback home sales
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/rental-rates-skyrocket-homebuyers-sellers-retreat-housing-market/QZCR6K2D2BEZBDXTRE5IHJWIM/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – Seattle ranks among the top 10 metro areas experiencing the fastest increasing rent rates as high interest rates lead more would-be buyers to rent and more sellers to become landlords.</p> <p>According to rent.com, the increase comes down to supply and demand – the rental market is squeezed as high-income earners move to the area and high interest rates drive would-be homebuyers to rent in an area already experiencing limited inventory.</p> <p>"We've seen a big pullback in home sales and that's because both buyers and sellers are scared off of this market because it's so expensive to borrow compared to how expensive it was a year ago," said Redfin chief economist Daryl Fairweather.</p> <p>According to a new Redfin report, more sellers are retreating amid falling prices and volatile mortgage rates.</p> <p>"Homeowners, they don't really have a good reason to sell right now, they're sitting on record equity, they locked in low mortgage rates last year, so for them they can just keep paying those low monthly mortgage payments and just hold on until the housing market eventually turns around," said Fairweather.</p> <p>The average home sold for less than its list price for the first time in over 17 months during August, according to that same Redfin report.</p> <p>Meanwhile, pending home sales are down 18% nationwide and new listings and total inventory are down, too.</p>

“Buyers and sellers are reevaluating their one-year plan or two-year plan,” said Adriano Tori, founder and CEO of RexMont Real Estate.

In turn, would-be buyers are stuck as renters and would-be sellers are becoming landlords.

“We’re seeing the demand (for rentals) increasing every single month, so there is an interesting, actually, parallel to what we’ve seen in the last few years in the rental market where we’re seeing 10 (to) 15 applications for desirable (rental) property that comes up in the community,” Tori said.

Nelya Calev, a real estate agent with John L. Scott Real Estate, said she had a client who recently pulled their listing and opted to rent the property in response to the housing market changes.

“It didn’t make sense for him to drop his price to where it would sell because of what he paid for it, so we ended up pulling it off the market, renting the home and then we’ll just reevaluate everything a year from now,” Calev said.

Calev said the property was rented within a week, and the owner was able to secure a monthly rental rate higher than his mortgage, leaving him cash flow positive.

Seattle as a whole is seeing a 22% increase in year-over-year rental rates – the [eighth fastest growing rental rate in the country](#), according to Redfin.

“Seattle’s just a desirable place to live, it really does have a lot going on for it, so when people get pushed out of the housing market, they still want to live here and that pushes up rents,” Fairweather said.

New numbers from [rent.com](#) break down the year-on-year rent [increases by city](#).

Seattle Average Rent Prices:

- Studio - \$1813 +20%
- 1 Bed – \$2599 +14%
- 2 Bed – \$3813 +39%
- 3 Bed – \$9968 +257%

Everett Average Rent Prices:

- Studio – \$2298 -1%
- 1 Bed – \$1787 +18%
- 2 Bed - \$2127 +38%
- 3 Bed – \$2629 +36%

Tacoma Average Rent Prices:

- Studio – \$1485 +6%
- 1 Bed -- \$1929 +7%
- 2 Bed – \$2329 +8%
- 3 Bed – \$2100 +2%

The issue is compounded by a lack of affordable units.

Across the Puget Sound, Zillow currently shows nearly 5400 available rental listings. But 82% of them cost more than \$1800 per month.

So, will rental prices continue to go up?

Fairweather said, “I think it will slow down just because what the fed is doing with rising interest rates, it’s going to slow down the economy overall, it’s going to fight inflation. Inflation is included in that when people have less money to spend because they have to pay more on their car payment or their credit card debt that impacts the kinds of apartments they are going to be able to rent. That will depress rents, or at

	least slow down the increase, but I don't think it's going to be good news. People are still going to struggle to afford their basic needs, especially when rents keep going up at this pace."
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Mississippi squandered welfare funds?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/nations-poorest-state-used-welfare-money-pay-brett-favre-speeches-neve-rcna45871
GIST	<p>Brett Favre earned nearly \$140 million as a star NFL quarterback over two decades and millions more in product endorsements.</p> <p>But that didn't stop the state of Mississippi from paying Favre \$1.1 million in 2017 and 2018 to make motivational speeches — out of federal welfare funds intended for needy families. The Mississippi state auditor said Favre never gave the speeches and demanded the money back, with interest.</p> <p>Favre has repaid the fees, although not the \$228,000 in interest the auditor also demanded. But the revelation by the auditor that \$70 million in TANF welfare funds was doled out to a multimillionaire athlete, a professional wrestler, a horse farm and a volleyball complex are at the heart of a scandal that has rocked the nation's poorest state, sparking parallel state and federal criminal investigations that have led to charges and guilty pleas involving some of the key players.</p> <p>Favre hasn't been accused of a crime or charged, and he declined an interview. His lawyer, Bud Holmes, said he did nothing wrong and never understood he was paid with money intended to help poor children. Holmes acknowledged that the FBI had questioned Favre in the case, a fact that hasn't previously been reported.</p> <p>The saga, which has been boiling at low grade for 2½ years, drew new attention in July, when the state welfare agency fired a lawyer who had been hired to claw back some of the money, just after he issued a subpoena seeking more information about the roles of Favre and the former governor, Phil Bryant, a Republican. The current governor, Republican Tate Reeves, acknowledged playing a role in the decision to sack Brad Pigott, accusing the Bill Clinton-appointed former U.S. attorney of having a political agenda. But the state official who first uncovered the misspending and fraud, auditor Shad White, is a Republican.</p> <p>In his first television interview since he was fired, Pigott said his only agenda was to get at the truth and to recoup U.S. taxpayer funds sent to Mississippi that he says were "squandered."</p> <p>"The notion of tens of millions of dollars that was intended by the country to go to the alleviation of poverty — and to see it going toward very different purposes — was appalling to many of us," he said. "Mr. Favre was a very great quarterback, but having been a great NFL quarterback, he is not well acquainted with poverty."</p> <p>Pigott, who before he was fired sued on behalf of Mississippi's welfare agency, naming Favre and 37 other grant recipients, laid ultimate blame at the feet of top Mississippi politicians, including Bryant.</p> <p>"Governor Bryant gave tens of millions of dollars of this TANF welfare money to a nonprofit led by a person who he knew well and who had more connections with his political party than with the good people in Mississippi who have the heart and the skills to actually cajole people out of poverty or prevent teenage pregnancies," he said.</p> <p>In an interview with the website Mississippi Today, Bryant said he never knew the grants came from welfare money. His lawyer didn't respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>The person in charge of the nonprofit group Pigott was referring to is Nancy New, a close friend of Bryant's wife. New and her son have pleaded guilty to state and federal charges and agreed to</p>

cooperate. New, a key player in doling out the money, said in a [court document](#) that Bryant was among those involved in directing the transactions. Her lawyer declined to comment.

The former head of the state welfare agency, John Davis, has pleaded not guilty to state charges of bribery and conspiracy, and law enforcement officials say the investigations continue.

Favre defended himself in a [series of tweets](#) last year against allegations from White, the state auditor, that he accepted state money for speeches he never intended to give.

“I would never knowingly take funds meant to help our neighbors in need, but for Shad White to continue to push out this lie that the money was for no-show events is something I cannot stay silent about,” Favre tweeted.

The speeches aren’t the only welfare grants tied to Favre. [Text messages](#) obtained by Mississippi Today and authenticated by Pigott show that Favre sought a \$3.2 million grant for a drug company in which he was a shareholder and a \$5 million award that built a volleyball arena at the University of Southern Mississippi, where his daughter played the sport and where he played football. Favre’s lawyer declined to comment.

The drug company, [Prevacus](#), was touting treatments to mitigate the effects of concussions, although none were approved by the Food and Drug Administration. In some texts, Favre suggested awarding shares in the drug company to Bryant while he was governor.

“Don’t know if legal or not but we need cut him in,” Favre texted a company official in November 2018, referring to Bryant. Following up three days later, Favre wrote, “Also if legal I’ll give some of my shares to the Governor.”

Bryant has said he never would have accepted such an offer.

“All of it remains quite a mystery,” Pigott told NBC News, “as to why Mr. Favre would get the benefit of millions of dollars in TANF welfare money, both for a fee for speeches he didn’t make, \$2 million-plus to go to a company in which he was the largest outside individual investor and \$5 million for his alma mater to play volleyball in a volleyball building.”

The state auditor said he found other “no show” contracts benefiting former pro athletes and family members of Davis, the welfare agency director.

The auditor said Davis directed one contract to Austin Smith, his nephew, who was paid more than \$400,000 to provide “coding skills” classes even though prosecutors allege he had no such skills “and did not know how to teach.”

At least \$3 million went to Ted DiBiase, a retired professional wrestler. Marcus Dupree, a former college football star, also received \$370,000 in welfare funds, which prosecutors say partly went to fund his horse ranch.

Paul LaCoste, who is the current governor’s athletic trainer, was paid \$300,000 in welfare funds to run a fitness boot camp for legislators.

DiBiase, Dupree, LaCoste and Smith didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.

The scandal has also spotlighted the meager scope of Mississippi’s welfare program and provided a stark reminder of the Clinton-era welfare reform that provided states with block grants and wide latitude in how they spend them. According to state figures, Mississippi rejects more than 90% of those who apply for the federal welfare benefit known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF. This year 2,500 children received benefits, state officials said, in a state with 192,000 poor children.

One of those who had trouble getting help was Tamara Edwards, who raised four children on her own while working a series of low-wage jobs.

She once received welfare vouchers for child care, and in 2009 she applied again, she said. Even though her income was low enough, she was denied.

“They told me they didn’t have the funds,” said Edwards, who now works as a cook at a Cracker Barrel restaurant.

Advocates and state legislators say Mississippi’s welfare agency, under years of conservative Republican state governments, has a history of questionable spending and a lack of transparency.

“TANF has been a slush fund for a long time,” said Oleta Fitzgerald, who is the director of the Children’s Defense Fund’s Southern Regional Office and is based in Jackson, the state capital. “Mississippi is the poorest doggone state in the country — where is the money, and what are they doing with it? There is nobody on welfare — welfare participation rates are way down — and no one knows where that money is being spent.”

Aisha Nyandoro, the chief executive of Springboard to Opportunities, a local nonprofit group that works with residents of affordable housing, said: “And DHS [the state Department of Human Services] will tell you that the reason that they cannot go about allocating the TANF funds is because they can’t find any families who are eligible. Go outside and throw a rock. It’s Mississippi. You can find an eligible family.”

Jarvis Dortsch, a former state legislator who heads the state’s chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said that when he was a member of the Legislature, “I could not get a list of how the money was being spent.”

Dortsch said he had to resort to secrecy.

“Someone had snuck me a list — it didn’t have [a] DHS [logo] on it — they had it printed out and snuck it out,” he said.

White, the auditor, told NBC News the investigation goes on. “My office is continuing the work we started over two years ago on what is now the largest public fraud case in our state’s history,” he said. “We will also continue to work with our state and federal partners to be sure each person responsible for this massive scheme is held fully accountable under the law.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Rival militias reprisal attacks southern Iraq
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/militiamen-killed-reprisal-attacks-southern-iraq-89162275
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD -- Four militants were killed in reprisal attacks between rival Shiite militia groups in southern Iraq, two security officials said Thursday, after violent clashes in Baghdad brought the country to the precipice of street warfare.</p> <p>Iraqi security forces were swiftly deployed in the southern oil-rich city of Basra to contain the violence that erupted overnight between an armed faction of powerful cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and the Asaib Ahl al-Haq paramilitary group, led by a key, Iran-backed rival.</p> <p>Two militiamen from al-Sadr's group Saraya Salam and two from AAH were killed in the attacks, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media. The details of the attacks were not immediately clear and there were conflicting reports.</p> <p>The attacks come after clashes in Baghdad's government zone between al-Sadr's loyalists and Iraqi security forces left at least 30 people dead and over 400 wounded. The armed hostilities ended on Tuesday when al-Sadr called on his followers to withdraw.</p>

The threat of more clashes looms as the political rivalry between al-Sadr and his Iran-backed rivals in the Coordination Framework bloc, which includes the leader of AAH, Qais al-Khazali, have not been settled.

Both camps disagree over the appropriate mechanism to dissolve parliament and hold early elections, key demands of al-Sadr. His party won the 2021 general election but was not able to reach the legislative quorum to vote in a government that excluded his Iran-friendly rivals.

The U.N. Security Council condemned the recent violence, appealed for “calm and restraint,” and urged all parties to peacefully resolve their difference and respect the rule of law and the right to peaceful assembly.

A Supreme Court session to decide on whether the judiciary can dissolve parliament, a demand of al-Sadr, has been postponed to next Wednesday. A negative ruling is expected to elicit a reaction from the cleric.

For now, the tensions appear to have migrated from Baghdad to the southern majority Shiite provinces where the state's authority is frayed. Saraya Salam and AAH have been engaged in revenge attacks for years. The clashes in Baghdad led to the recent flare-up when al-Sadr's militiamen attacked AAH's offices.

In retaliation, AAH attacked al-Sadr's militiamen and a battle ensued for several hours throughout the night. By Thursday morning, Basra's governor, Asad al-Eidani, said calm had been restored.

Al-Sadr's representative who goes by the Twitter moniker Salah Mohammed al-Iraqi hurled a personal attack against Khazali following the altercations, calling his militias “mad dogs.”

Khazali later instructed his followers not to be provoked by the comments and for AAH to close their offices until further notice.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Iran responds to nuclear talks; US doubtful
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-sends-nuclear-talks-response-us-casts-doubt-89204829
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Iran sent a written response early Friday in negotiations over a final draft of a roadmap for parties to return to its tattered nuclear deal with world powers, though the U.S. cast doubt on Tehran's offer.</p> <p>Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said in a statement that “the sent text has a constructive approach with the aim of finalizing the negotiations.”</p> <p>However, as in the last round of written proposals and counters, Iran offered no public acknowledgment of what it said. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state in the country's Shiite theocracy, largely has been silent in recent weeks on the negotiations.</p> <p>In Washington, the State Department confirmed it received Iran's response through the European Union, which has served as an intermediary for the indirect talks after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord in 2018.</p> <p>"We are studying it and will respond through the EU, but unfortunately it is not constructive," the State Department said, similarly not elaborating on what the proposal contained.</p> <p>The 2015 deal saw Iran greatly curtail its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Under the deal, Iran could have only 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of uranium enriched up to 3.67% under constant scrutiny of International Atomic Energy Agency surveillance cameras and inspectors.</p>

	<p>Now, however, the last public IAEA count shows Iran has a stockpile of some 3,800 kilograms (8,370 pounds) of enriched uranium. More worrying for nonproliferation experts, Iran now enriches uranium up to 60% purity — a level it never reached before that is a short, technical step away from 90%. Those experts warn Iran has enough 60%-enriched uranium to reprocess into fuel for at least one nuclear bomb.</p> <p>While Iran long has maintained its program is peaceful, officials now openly discuss Tehran's ability to seek an atomic bomb if it wanted. Meanwhile, a series of attacks across the wider Mideast since the deal's collapse have raised tensions of a wider conflict breaking out.</p> <p>Both the U.S. and Iran have tried to portray the ongoing negotiations as bending in their favor on issues like the American sanctions targeting Tehran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard.</p> <p>Earlier this week, Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi maintained that an IAEA investigation into traces of man-made uranium found at undeclared nuclear sites in the country must be halted.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 Myanmar: more jail time for ousted leader
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/myanmar-court-sentences-suu-kyi-years-voting-fraud-89209365
GIST	<p>BANGKOK -- A court in Myanmar on Friday sentenced ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to three years' imprisonment with labor after finding her guilty of election fraud, adding more jail time to the 17 years she is already serving for other offenses prosecuted by the military government.</p> <p>The latest verdict also carries potentially significant political consequences for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party by lending support to the government's explicit threats to dissolve it before a new election the military has promised for 2023.</p> <p>Suu Kyi's party won the the 2020 general election in a landslide victory, but the army seized power the following February and kept her from a second five-year term in office. The army contends it acted because of alleged widespread fraud in the polls though independent election observers did not find any major irregularities. Some critics of Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, who led the takeover and is now Myanmar's top leader, believe he acted because the vote thwarted his own political ambitions.</p> <p>The military's seizure prompted widespread peaceful protests that were quashed with lethal force, triggering armed resistance that some U.N. experts now characterize as civil war.</p> <p>Suu Kyi had already been sentenced to 17 years in prison on charges of illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies, violating coronavirus restrictions, sedition and five counts of corruption. Many top members of her party and government also have been jailed, while others are in hiding or have fled abroad.</p> <p>Suu Kyi's supporters and independent analysts say all the charges against her are politically motivated and an attempt to discredit her and legitimize the military's seizure of power while keeping her from returning to politics.</p> <p>Friday's ruling by the special court at the prison in the capital, Naypyitaw, was conveyed by a legal official who insisted on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities, who have restricted the release of information about Suu Kyi's trials. He said all the defendants appeared in good health.</p> <p>He said that ousted President Win Myint and the former minister of the president's office, Min Thu, both co-defendants in the election fraud case, each received sentences of three years. All three received prison terms with labor, a category of punishment distinct from hard labor that can involve light workshop activities. Lawyers will file appeals in the coming days, he added.</p>

The election fraud charge against Suu Kyi was filed in November by the Election Commission, whose members were replaced by the military after it seized power.

It charged that Suu Kyi and her colleagues violated provisions in the constitution by allegedly influencing the old commission.

The military-appointed commission accused them of being “involved in electoral processes, election fraud and lawless actions” related to the election.

The commission claimed it has found more than 11 million irregularities in voter lists that could have let voters cast multiple ballots or commit other fraud.

Thein Soe, the new Election Commission chief, has said his agency would consider dissolving Suu Kyi’s party, charging that it had worked illegally with the government to give itself an advantage at the polls.

State media reported after a meeting two months ago of the ruling National Defense and Security Council that 2,417 officials had been prosecuted for failing to supervise the electoral processes and action was underway to prosecute voters who cast their ballots more than once.

The Election Commission has also warned that Suu Kyi’s party would be disbanded if it did not submit its financial accounts and expenses for inspection. The commission said it was examining political parties to see whether they were maintaining and using funds in accordance with the law.

Commission member Khin Maung Oo said the examination of Suu Kyi’s party would be delayed because some of its officers had been arrested and others had gone into hiding. Party officials who have escaped arrest said last year that they do not recognize the military-appointed commission and its statements are illegal.

In separate proceedings, Suu Kyi is being tried on the charge of violating the Official Secrets Act, which carries a maximum sentence of 14 years, and seven counts of corruption charges, which carry a maximum sentence of 15 years each.

Although there is little support for the army’s power grab and skepticism about its claims, they were not alone in criticizing the election, even before the vote took place.

The bedrock problem with Myanmar’s democracy is that the country’s 2008 constitution, drafted under a previous army-led government, reserves 25% of seats in parliament for unelected military officials and grants the military control of key government ministries.

Independent rights groups had criticized the disenfranchisement of the Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority and cancellation of the vote in certain areas under Suu Kyi’s first government. The Election Commission had cited the dangers of combat between government forces and ethnic minority guerrillas, but critics suggested certain areas were singled out for cancellation because they were certain to elect lawmakers from parties not allied to Suu Kyi’s.

A lack of transparency raised questions about the impartiality of the commission, which was appointed by Suu Kyi’s government.

Human rights groups and other observers also had concerns about a continued crackdown by her government on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including the arbitrary arrest and detention of civil society actors and activists.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 NKorea: UN rights monitor US ‘puppet’
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korea-calls-monitor-rights-issue-puppet-us-89198258

GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea called the U.N.'s top expert on the country's human rights "a puppet" of the United States, warning Friday that it won't tolerate an American-led plot to use the rights issue to overthrow its political system.</p> <p>North Korea is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of its rights record, viewing it as an attempt to slander and rattle its authoritarian rule of its 26 million people, most of whom have little access to foreign news.</p> <p>Its latest reaction comes as Elizabeth Salmón, the U.N. special rapporteur on the North's human rights, is making her first visit to South Korea this week to meet officials, activists and North Korean defectors since her appointment last month.</p> <p>In her inaugural statement, Salmón said North Koreans face "new and more serious hardships" because of severe pandemic-related curbs that added to decades-long abuses, which she said must not be neglected. She said she was convinced that international solidarity should be more decisively mobilized to protect human rights in North Korea.</p> <p>On Friday, an unidentified spokesperson at the North's Foreign Ministry issued a statement slamming the U.N. rapporteur without mentioning her name directly.</p> <p>The statement accused Salmón of displaying "ignorance and biased vision." It criticized her for making "unpardonable reckless remarks encroaching upon our inviolable system and sovereign rights" during her visit to South Korea.</p> <p>The statement also accused Washington of being behind Salmón, saying, "We know well that the U.S. deeply stretches out its tentacles on (her) back."</p> <p>"The 'human rights' racket of the U.S. and other hostile forces has nothing to do with the guarantee of true human rights and is nothing but the most politicized hostile means for tarnishing the dignified image of (North Korea)," the statement said.</p> <p>"(North Korea) will never pardon the U.S. and its vassal forces' 'human rights' racket ... which is aimed at overthrowing its social system."</p> <p>The North's ministry repeated an earlier position that it will never recognize or deal with any U.N. special rapporteur on its human rights. Salmón's predecessors were denied access to North Korea, which observers say has challenged outside attempts to find more independent and credible information on rights abuses.</p> <p>In a new report circulated Thursday, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that North Korea has increased the repression of the rights and freedoms of its people and the U.N. Security Council should consider referring it to the International Criminal Court for possible crimes against humanity.</p> <p>North Korea remains under multiple rounds of U.N. sanctions over its nuclear and missile programs. During their meeting in Hawaii on Thursday, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and his South Korean and Japanese counterparts condemned the North's continued development of its ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while the U.S. reaffirmed its "ironclad alliance commitments" to its two key Asian allies, according to a U.S. statement.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Jackson Mississippi facing water crisis
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/set-accumulated-problems-jackson-mississippi-facing-water-crisis/story?id=89163653

GIST

Residents of Jackson, Mississippi, are facing a clean water shortage, days after Gov. Tate Reeves announced a major pump at the city's main water treatment facility was damaged. The city's mayor says the current water crisis is a result of years-long issues.

The [damage to the O.B. Curtis Water Treatment plant](#) happened after the city experienced a high level of flooding due to heavy rainfall over the last week, leaving the city without enough safe water for people to use.

The damaged facility resulted in a total loss or near-total [loss of water pressure](#) throughout Jackson and other areas in Hinds County that receive water from the plant.

A new pump arrived and was installed at the facility on Wednesday, Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba said. But Reeves said on the same day that there is a tremendous amount of work to be done on the plant and the boil water notice in the city will continue until further notice.

Record flooding over the weekend caused water to fill up the Barnett Reservoir in central Mississippi. Flooding crested on Monday when water levels were measured at a peak of 35.37 feet, just below the major flood stage of 36 feet. Water levels above 28 feet are considered flood stage. The water has since been receding.

On Monday, Reeves said the city is using backup pumps, but until the problem is fixed, residents will not have reliable running water and the city will not be able to produce enough water for serious needs, including fighting fires and flushing toilets. A second water treatment facility, J.H. Fewell, is also experiencing an insufficient number of certified operators, according to the Mississippi Department of Health's emergency order.

According to Lumumba, the city has been experiencing "a constant state of emergency" for the last two years when it comes to its water supply. Even when there isn't low water pressure or the city has not issued a boil water notice, the crisis continues, he said during a press briefing Tuesday.

"I have said on multiple occasions, that it's not a matter of if our system would fail. But a matter of when our system will fail," Lumumba said.

The Pearl River area in Jackson experienced [severe flooding in 2020](#) when water levels crested at 36.67 feet.

Staffing shortages, system issues and numerous equipment failures have all contributed to the overall failure of the water plant, according to Lumumba.

"This is a set of accumulated problems based on deferred maintenance that has not taken place over decades," Lumumba said.

In an interview on ABC News Live Tuesday, Lumumba said the current crisis stems from up to 30 years of deferred maintenance and a lack of capital improvements to the system.

"We've had hotter summers, colder winters and more precipitation each year and it's taking a toll on our infrastructure. And so we need the support to not only create sustainability and equity in our system, but to also weatherize our system," Lumumba said.

The current crisis happened because the facility was receiving flood water, that changed the overall composition of the water making it difficult to treat and potentially dangerous, he said. The plant therefore needed more time to treat the water, which is why residents were experiencing little water pressure and less water supply.

Officials are flushing bad water out of the system and attempting to do critical maintenance and emergency repairs, but Reeves warned Wednesday that there will be future interruptions, saying they are unavoidable at this point.

A chemical imbalance at the plant on Wednesday also forced officials to shut down part of the plant. While there were some improvements made, the plant is still facing an electrical and mechanical problem, Jim Craig, the director of health protection at the state's Department of Health, said Wednesday. Sludge at the bottom of the water basins at the plant is also a huge issue, Craig said.

To solve the ongoing crisis, Lumumba said that it could [cost billions of dollars](#), "far beyond the city's reach" to fix or replace the water plant. The city has put in millions of dollars already towards the system, but it will likely fall short, said the mayor.

"The residents of Jackson are worthy. They are worthy of a dependable system, and we look forward to a coalition of the willing that will join us in the fight to improve this system that has been failing for decades," said Lumumba on Tuesday.

The governor has declared [a state of emergency](#) and activated the National Guard. The state has set up water distribution sites to hand out drinkable and non-drinkable water to residents in the meantime, opening up seven new sites on Thursday.

Reeves also requested an emergency federal declaration for the water crisis, which was approved by President Joe Biden.

[Return to Top](#)

Cyber, Tech Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Hacks tied to Russia war: minor impact
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/hacks-tied-to-russia-and-ukraine-war-have-had-minor-impact-researchers-say/
GIST	<p>Although politicians and cybersecurity experts have warned about the potential for widespread hacks in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a new study finds that attacks linked to the conflict have had minor impact and are unlikely to escalate further.</p> <p>Researchers from the University of Cambridge, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Strathclyde examined data from two months before and four months after the invasion. They analyzed 281,000 web defacement attacks, 1.7 million distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, and hundreds of announcements on Telegram used by hackers to coordinate their activity.</p> <p>According to the analysis, which was published last week, Russia was the first to be attacked at scale, followed by Ukraine a few days later. The increase in cyberattacks lasted for about two weeks before returning to the pre-war levels.</p> <p>At the time, ransomware gangs around the world pledged allegiance to one side of the conflict or the other. Some researchers argued that hacktivists would wreak havoc on the stability of cyberspace, signaling a future where war would involve hybrid conflicts that would be chaotic and unpredictable.</p> <p>But according to the research, hacktivists mostly used DDoS attacks that temporarily made websites unreachable, as well as defacement attacks that altered websites' appearance. Rather than targeting critical infrastructure, as expected, hackers attacked "harmless, defunct, or trivial websites" with Russian or Ukrainian domain names, including food delivery services, news websites and streaming services.</p> <p>Most of the attacks were carried out by low-level cybercriminals using widely available tools. "Websites providing DDoS as-a-service abound, so launching attacks is straightforward, even for those without much technical skill," the six researchers behind the study wrote.</p>

Most of the researchers involved in the study are professors who have extensive cybersecurity experience and have published scholarly papers on the topic. The study was published on arXiv.org and is awaiting peer review.

Due to the widespread availability of these services, DDoS activity continued for weeks, while defacement attacks were carried out in the first couple of days.

“[Defacement] was widely used as the conflict started because it could deliver political messages and propaganda,” the researchers wrote. Later, attackers simply lost interest and ran out of targets.

Many hackers didn’t have a strong political viewpoint on the war — they attacked “just for fun or as a hobby,” the researchers said. “They appear to be classic cybercrime entrepreneurs, whose own use of their tools outside a business context occasionally takes a political dimension.”

Although a lot of attention has recently been given to Ukrainian and Russian cyberattacks, they still make up a small portion of global cyberattacks, the researchers noted.

With DDoS attacks, for example, the U.S. victims still dominate, with almost 25% of all attacks, followed by Brazil (12%) and Bangladesh (8%), according to the researchers. Ukraine and Russia together only make up about 5% of DDoS attacks.

Some cybercrime activities were effective during the war, according to the research: leaks of high-profile datasets gathered from Russian public services, for example, as well as ransomware attacks using wipers.

“But the so-called ‘defacements’ are the rough equivalent of breaking into a disused shopping center on the outskirts of a mid-sized Russian city and spraypainting “Putin Sux” on the walls,” according to researchers.

“These are trivial acts of solidarity, teenage competition, and expressive delinquency, not a contribution to the armed conflict in any real sense,” they said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Police best-kept secret? Location data app
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2022/09/cops-wanted-to-keep-mass-surveillance-app-secret-privacy-advocates-refused/
GIST	<p>Much is known about how the federal government leverages location data by serving warrants to major tech companies like Google or Facebook to investigate crime in America. However, much less is known about how location data influences state and local law enforcement investigations. It turns out that's because many local police agencies intentionally avoid mentioning the under-the-radar tech they use—sometimes without warrants—to monitor private citizens.</p> <p>As one Maryland-based sergeant wrote in a department email, touting the benefit of "no court paperwork" before purchasing the software, "The success lies in the secrecy."</p> <p>This week, an investigation from the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Associated Press—supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting—has made public what could be considered local police's best-kept secret. Their reporting revealed the potentially extreme extent of data surveillance of ordinary people being tracked and made vulnerable just for moving about small-town America.</p> <p>Reports showed how police in nearly two dozen agencies—one record shows the total figure could possibly be up to 60—use Google Maps-like tech called Fog Reveal. Licensed by Fog Data Science, Fog Reveal gives state and local police power to surveil what the company's marketing materials claimed in 2019 amounts to "hundreds of billions of records from 250 million mobile devices."</p>

EFF found that Fog Reveal draws its data from Venntel, [the same data source the feds use](#). Although neither company disclosed the nature of their business relationship to AP or EFF, it appears that because of their partnership with Venntel, Fog Reveal provides location data services to local police at a steep discount. This makes it more affordable for smaller police agencies and private security companies to access broad swaths of data and trace devices across months or even years.

Venntel provided Ars with the same statement it gave AP: "The confidential nature of our business relationships" prevents the company from responding to questions.

Typically, EFF found that police agencies have licensed the software annually for costs as low as \$6,000 to \$9,000. Some agencies were willing to spend more on the tech, though. Ars reviewed [one annual contract in Anaheim, California](#), that was for more than \$40,000.

It took the Electronic Frontier Foundation months and more than 100 public records requests to gather [thousands of pages of evidence](#) to compile a clear picture that shows how local law enforcement increasingly mines location data. Records showed Fog Reveal has been used in criminal investigations, including, as AP reports, "tracing the movements of a potential participant in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol."

Fog Data Science managing partner Matthew Broderick told AP that Fog Reveal has been critical to police to save time and money on investigations, suggesting police were under-resourced and investigations suffered from reliance on outdated tech. [\(Bloomberg reported that most cities increased local police budgets last year.\)](#)

"Local law enforcement is at the front lines of trafficking and missing persons cases, yet these departments are often behind in technology adoption," Broderick told AP. "We fill a gap for underfunded and understaffed departments."

EFF found that some agencies stopped using Fog Reveal because it wasn't providing enough information on its own to aid investigations. It also found at least [one instance of a sergeant questioning the legality of using Fog Reveal](#) due to [Carpenter v. United States](#). In that case, it was found that wireless carriers couldn't share location data with the Federal Bureau of Investigation because doing so violated the suspect's reasonable expectation of privacy.

AP reported that Broderick said "that the company does not have access to people's personal information," instead drawing from "commercially available data without restrictions to use." Broderick defended Fog Reveal's legality by saying all location data came from data brokers "that legitimately purchase data from apps in accordance with their legal agreements." This essentially asserts that privacy agreements between apps and their users elicit broad consent for third-party data brokers to then buy the data and share it with police, alleging users gave consent.

The head of EFF's investigation into Fog Reveal, [Bennett Cyphers](#), wrote that this is an old argument that "rests on a legal fiction [of consent](#) that [EFF](#), [courts](#), and [members of Congress](#) have repeatedly criticized because it fails to adequately protect people's privacy." He told AP that one risk of lawmakers ignoring this new report was increasing surveillance of people in smaller towns going unnoticed, posing a bigger threat than federal agencies. These are the law enforcement agencies that Americans interact with most often, and now there's evidence they'll be monitoring Americans more frequently.

"We're seeing counties with less than 100,000 people where the sheriff is using this extremely high-tech, extremely invasive, secretive surveillance tool to chase down local crime," Cyphers told AP.

A Fog Data Science spokesperson told Ars that the company plans to clarify some aspects of AP's and EFF's reporting. Ars will update the story with any new information when it becomes available.

Reconstructing Fog Reveal to test how it works

Matthew Guariglia, an EFF policy analyst who contributed to the report, told Ars that EFF stumbled upon Fog Reveal while filing a bunch of records requests with data brokers. After attempts to research Fog Reveal showed the app has barely any presence on Google, EFF became more interested.

"They had almost no online presence," Guariglia told Ars. "They're almost invisible."

Because EFF targeted smaller police departments for public records requests across the US, it could learn more about Fog Reveal much faster than it may have if EFF targeted larger police departments in cities like New York, which can take years.

The result: EFF reported that "Fog Data Science is the only company EFF is aware of that sells individualized location data to state and local law enforcement in the United States."

Once they discovered the tool, EFF found that its "sleek search engine" Fog Reveal typically can only be accessed by police account holders. Wanting to learn more, EFF did a ["deep dive" into Fog Reveal's front-end code](#) and then took the extra step to reconstruct the software just to examine its features.

Some of EFF's reconstruction was based on "educated guesses," so the organization also [made the code available](#) so that others could clearly understand all the limitations of EFF's analysis.

Limitations aside, EFF's analysis showed that when police open [Fog Reveal](#), the software appears and functions much like Google Maps. To launch a search, police can run two kinds of queries, an area search and a device search.

For area searches, police can draw circles or squares around areas as wide as 12 square feet or draw unique shapes to target specific buildings and pull up a "list of all cell phone location signals" within a specified area during a specified time. The list includes location, time, and device IDs.

Device searches give police the ability to input one or more devices, narrow down the time frame of their search, and see a list of locations where the device was used.

Examples of Fog Reveal maps that EFF replicated showed the eeriest extent police could trace a device path over time, watching someone's movements as a zigzag through a specified region and knowing where precisely that person was and when.

Cyphers concluded that "Fog's service allows police to track people's movements"—both broadly and specifically—"over long periods of time." Police can start by searching everyone in an area and then toggle to the device search to find out where people connected to those devices "live and work."

This, Cyphers wrote, allows local police the same capability federal agencies have when serving geofence warrants to Google, without needing Google's permission or a warrant.

EFF couldn't verify all of Fog's claims about the service, but records showed that some devices being tracked by Fog Reveal could share data with the software as much as an average "several hundred" times per day.

While reconstructing the app was not a perfect science, EFF reported that these insights into Fog Reveal's interface have also shown for the first time how Venntel's user interface works. Venntel's interface looks a little different, though, and EFF's report noted that Fog Reveal does not seem to share as much data with state and local police as Venntel does with federal agencies.

How is this legal?

One critic in AP's report called EFF's attempts to highlight privacy concerns over law enforcement reliance on Fog Reveal contributing to a "cult of privacy." But EFF says that, unlike communications companies that generally require a warrant, "Fog does not require police officers to obtain a warrant or other court order before acquiring this location data."

On top of potentially violating *Carpenter v. US*, Fog Reveal could be violating First and Fourth Amendment protections, according to EFF. Area searches identifying protestors at public gatherings could violate the First Amendment by discouraging attendance of protests, and the US Supreme Court has previously ruled, EFF noted, "the Fourth Amendment requires police to get a warrant before seizing historical location data" or "cell site location data" from wireless carriers—which could be a protection extended to consumers who experience the same privacy risks via data brokers.

For people who live in heavily policed areas, EFF says, Fog Reveal encourages police to regard nearby residents with suspicion just for being near the site of a crime when it occurred. EFF warned, "police could easily see your device located near the crime and recommend you for more surveillance."

Meaningful change to mass public surveillance by police likely won't come, EFF says, until Congress passes data privacy and online advertising laws that would prevent broad data tracking and disrupt the [billion-dollar location data market](#).

In the meantime, Guariglia told Ars that EFF will continue investigating Fog Reveal and plans to get Congress involved.

"The fact that government agencies from the military all the way down to your local police department can, with a few bucks, buy the geolocation data of everybody, where otherwise they would need a warrant to get that information, is really disturbing," Guariglia said.

How to stop devices from appearing on Fog Reveal

[Guariglia wrote](#) that anyone who has downloaded a third-party app onto a smartphone and "granted it access to location data in the past five years" is at risk of appearing on Fog Reveal.

To prevent future location data logs from being generated on the police surveillance tool, [EFF reported](#) that there's one thing everyone can do. Mobile device advertiser identifiers have become "one key digital advertising technology that Fog and other data brokers have turned into a police surveillance technology," so users disabling ad IDs can go far to block unwanted tracking.

For iOS users, starting in iOS 10.0, Apple disabled ad IDs by default. Android users aren't so lucky but can update settings to disable the ad ID. To walk users through the process of disabling ad IDs, EFF provides [this guide](#) for both iOS and Android users. EFF also recommends that anyone in California [submit a "right to know" request to Venntel](#) under the California Privacy Act.

Guariglia said he expects that police will continue working with data brokers, and users who continue unwittingly sharing data with third parties will increasingly risk privacy violations that lawmakers could be doing more to prevent.

"I wish it were more unusual, but it seems like as police outsource more and more," Guariglia said, "to these private third-party companies," nobody's sure "what governs those relationships?" He's especially concerned, as in the case with Fog Reveal, about how hard it becomes to track privacy violations and potentially unconstitutional intrusions when "those relationships are hidden."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Google cuts Russian disinformation sites
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/google-ads-russian-disinformation/
GIST	<p>Google says it took additional steps in the past week so that brands would no longer see their ads on Russian state-owned websites that are a regular source of Ukraine war propaganda.</p> <p>The move comes after a software developer tweeted screenshots of ads from major Western companies placed through Google's display advertisement service alongside headlines spreading disinformation about the war.</p>

The Twitter thread — [posted on Aug. 24](#) by Braedon Vickers, a Singapore-based software engineer who builds tools to detect digital advertising trends — enraged disinformation experts, digital advertising watchdogs and U.S. senators who condemned Google for continuing to profit off of ads placed on [Russian websites](#).

“Continuing to run ads on these sites means Google — and the brands whose ads are run — are funding sites publishing this propaganda,” Vickers told CyberScoop. “Even when the sites aren’t dependent on this revenue to survive, having ads from well-known brands lends credibility to the sites, and what they’re pushing.”

The ads Vickers found and posted to Twitter are just the latest examples of Google-placed ads appearing on Russian-backed websites, a practice that congressional leaders and disinformation experts have long condemned because the ads provide money to the Russian government and bolster the propaganda it’s delivering to support the war.

“It is unacceptable for Google to keep placing ads on Russian websites that funnel money to Russian companies, months after it pledged to stop,” Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said in a statement to CyberScoop. “Google is either flouting its promises, or it doesn’t even know where it is selling ads.”

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va., told CyberScoop in a statement that “all companies have a responsibility to ensure that they are not helping to fund or even inadvertently support Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. ... It’s extremely disappointing to see an American company continue to financially support websites pushing Putin’s propaganda.”

Most if not all the problematic ads placed by Google are an example of what’s known as “programmatic” ad buying, which refers to the use of algorithmic software to buy and sell online display space. Google is by far the world’s biggest programmatic ad tech company in terms of the number of sites it works with. Vickers said that of the almost 1 million sites he tracks, 99.8% of them authorize at least one Google account to sell their ad inventory.

Vickers said Google often appears to “demonetize” ads it places by removing them from specific problematic articles as opposed to cutting off whole sites.

Google’s history of placing ads on Russian state-owned sites

Google has long been under fire for how its advertising practices fuel Russian propaganda. A day after Russia’s February invasion of Ukraine, Warner sent the company a letter encouraging it to “at a minimum” audit Google and Google sister brand YouTube’s advertising practices, including its compliance with sanctions.

[Warner’s letter to the CEO of Google](#) parent company Alphabet asserted that Google platforms “continue to be key vectors for malign actors — including, notably, those affiliated with the Russian government — to not only spread disinformation, but to profit from it.”

Two months after the Warner letter, digital advertising analysis company Adalytics issued a [report documenting numerous examples](#) of Google-served [digital ads appearing on websites](#) that were [explicitly listed on the US Treasury’s](#) Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctions list. In June, [Adalytics documented how Google](#) was sharing user data with a sanctioned Russian ad tech company owned by Russia’s largest state bank, a practice which was covered prominently in the media.

At the time, Google spokesperson Michael Aciman [told ProPublica](#) the company had blocked the Russian ad tech firm from purchasing ads directly from Google prior to the Adalytics report being issued but conceded that the Russian company was still receiving potentially sensitive user and ad buying data from Google before it learned about the issue from ProPublica and Adalytics. Aciman told ProPublica that it had “reviewed the entities in question and have taken appropriate enforcement action.”

Asked on Thursday about the latest example of Google ads appearing on Russian-backed disinformation sites, Aciman told CyberScoop in a prepared statement that Google employees had “reviewed the sites in question and have taken appropriate enforcement actions.” Aciman’s statement said that after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Google “also stopped the monetization of Russian state-funded media across our platforms. Since then, our teams have continued to monitor our network for additional state-funded actors and have demonetized them when detected.”

Aciman added that Google has updated its advertising and monetization policies in response to the war in Ukraine.

“Shortly after the war started, we stopped monetization on Russian state-funded media across our platforms, including YouTube,” he said. “This was not a singular action, and we’ve continued to demonetize state-funded media as we’ve detected it.”

The stakes for containing Russian disinformation

Asked about the latest example of [Western brands showing up on Russian disinformation sites](#), one of the companies whose ads were flagged in the Aug. 24 Twitter thread told CyberScoop it would no longer advertise with Google Display Network, which uses algorithmic software to serve auction-based digital advertising to targeted audiences.

“Our ad should not have appeared on this website — it clearly doesn’t align with who we are as a company,” Mark Molzan, Global Issues Director for the telecom company Lumen, which owns CenturyLink, told CyberScoop. “We have proactively turned off all the campaigns within Google Display until we can gain confidence the safeguards we have in place to prevent this type of placement are working as intended.”

Google did not say which of the sites running ads Vickers posted had been removed from its network but confirmed those removed were determined to be state-owned. Examples of the advertising Vickers posted from across the Russian sites made clear that state-owned or not many of the Google-served ads appear next to propaganda. “Zelensky’s plans to resign revealed,” said a headline appearing on one of the websites next to a large Adidas ad. Another headline appearing below a CenturyLink ad said, “West in shock: Russia has confirmed its status as a great power.”

Disinformation activists and digital advertising experts questioned why a company as powerful and well-resourced as Google continues to struggle to manage a problem that an individual software engineer detected and posted on Twitter.

“Propaganda needs three things to thrive: legitimacy, money, and data,” said Claire Atkin, co-founder of Check My Ads Institute, an independent watchdog. “It gets everything it needs from Google’s ad exchange. If Google cared about national security, they’d stop handing Russia the most powerful propaganda weapon to use against us.”

While most brands don’t want to send their money or credibility to these sites, by continuing to monetize them, Google makes it hard to avoid, Vickers said.

The full list of brands Adalytics found on sanctioned Russian sites in April included Adidas, Citibank, CVS, Facebook and Google itself, among many others, according to Adalytics CEO Krzysztof Franaszek.

“There’s been several incidents where journalists have notified Google of potentially illegal activities on Google’s ad network,” Franaszek said. “In each case, Google’s spokesperson gives a response such as: ‘We have strict policies’ or ‘If we find a site or partner violates our policies, we take immediate action.’”

He said in each case the websites or ad tech platforms explicitly mentioned by the journalist in their request for comment to Google appear to be removed within a few days of contact. However, after each of these incidents, he said, “researchers have noted that other similar cases not explicitly mentioned were not removed from Google’s ad network, even months or years later.”

HEADLINE	09/02 Raspberry Robin link to Russian group
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/09/new-evidence-links-raspberry-robin.html
GIST	<p>Researchers have identified functional similarities between a malicious component used in the Raspberry Robin infection chain and a Dridex malware loader, further strengthening the operators' connections to the Russia-based Evil Corp group.</p> <p>The findings suggest that "Evil Corp is likely using Raspberry Robin infrastructure to carry out its attacks," IBM Security X-Force researcher Kevin Henson said in a Thursday analysis.</p> <p>Raspberry Robin (aka QNAP Worm), first discovered by cybersecurity company Red Canary in September 2021, has remained something of a mystery for nearly a year, partly owing to the noticeable lack of post-exploitation activities in the wild.</p> <p>That changed in July 2022 when Microsoft revealed that it observed the FakeUpdates (aka SocGhosh) malware being delivered via existing Raspberry Robin infections, with potential connections identified between DEV-0206 and DEV-0243 (aka Evil Corp).</p> <p>The malware is known to be delivered from a compromised system via infected USB devices containing a malicious .LNK file to other devices in the target network. The Windows Shortcut files are designed to retrieve a malicious DLL from a remote server.</p> <p>"The Raspberry Robin loaders are DLLs that decode and execute an intermediate loader," Henson said. "The intermediate loader performs hook detection as an anti-analysis technique, decodes its strings at runtime and then decodes a highly obfuscated DLL whose purpose has not been determined."</p> <p>Furthermore, IBM Security X-Force's comparative analysis of a 32-bit Raspberry Robin loader and a 64-bit Dridex loader uncovered overlaps in functionality and structure, with both components incorporating similar anti-analysis code and decoding the final payload in an analogous manner.</p> <p>Dridex (aka Bugat or Cridex) is the handiwork of Evil Corp and refers to a banking trojan with capabilities to steal information, deploy additional malware such as ransomware, and enslave compromised Windows machines into a botnet.</p> <p>To mitigate Raspberry Robin infections, it's recommended that organizations monitor USB device connections and disable the AutoRun feature in the Windows operating system settings.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Effective credential phishing attack
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/email-security/credential-phishing-attack-targeted-16000-emails-at-nonprofit-agency
GIST	<p>Researchers have uncovered an effective recent phishing attack where the fraudster claims to be the prominent charge card brand American Express, and demands that cardholders open an attachment and contact the card company immediately regarding the cardholder's account, according to a Thursday research post from Armorblox.</p> <p>"Attackers took advantage of the loyalty and trust victims have in the brand, American Express, in an attempt to steal confidential information," according to the post, referencing the email spoofing of the well-regarded card brand.</p> <p>According to Armorblox, the email attack looked like a "legitimate notification email from American Express (AmEx) that included an attachment informing recipients that an account verification was mandatory; otherwise, the account would be suspended."</p>

However, the main link, within the email attachment message, navigated to a fake American Express-branded landing page that prompted victims to sign in to verify the account, which of course puts cardholders right where scammers want them.

“[Credential phishing](#) is the most prominent attack type we see against financial firms,” said DJ Sampath, co-founder and CEO of Armorblox. “This zero-day attack contained a malicious URL within the attachment, and protecting against this type of targeted attack is two-fold.”

Attackers used a known domain to launch this attack, Sampath said. However, since legacy and native email security solutions predominantly stop mass phishing attacks that originate from known malicious domains, many companies do not have the capabilities to stop these sophisticated attacks, he pointed out.

“Additionally, zero-day attacks require more advanced techniques such as computer vision-based website forensics,” Sampath added.

So far, bypassing Google Workspace security, at least 16,000 email addresses for employees at a large international nonprofit agency have been targeted by this attack. Since American Express is popular with business users, who are often issued their charge card by their employer, this tactic plays to the cardholder’s fear that they might run afoul of their business’s rules regarding expenses and reimbursement.

The scam utilizes social engineering, as well as brand impersonation, spoofed landing pages and malware, according to Armorblox, which altogether makes the ruse seem very realistic.

The subject line of these fraudulent emails or texts typically read, “Important Notification About Your Account,” which Armorblox research pointed out, “creat[es] a sense of urgency within the victim that this email is important and should be opened immediately. Once opened, the email looked like a [legitimate email communication](#) from American Express, with the information within the email body including directions on how best to view the secure, encrypted message attached.”

After opening the attachment, cardholders are asked to provide additional verification information for their charge card account.

Bad actors create even greater urgency by saying to their victims: “This is your last chance to confirm it before we suspend it.” This often motivates cardholders, especially with bank cards issued by an employer, to walk through the authentication process.

“Vendor compromise and supply chain attacks are the biggest threats to financial firms,” Sampath said. “And successful attackers can do extended damage to the organization’s reputation and financial standing.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Snake Keylogger new malspam campaign
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/snake-keylogger-malspam-campaign-it-firms/
GIST	<p>Snake Keylogger is back in action with a brand new malspam campaign spreading via phishing emails sent to corporate IT enterprises’ managers. Bitdefender Antispam Labs discovered the campaign on 23 August 2022.</p> <p>What is a Keylogger?</p> <p>A keylogger is a type of malicious software that records your keystrokes and sends them to a hacker. Keyloggers can be installed on your computer without your knowledge, usually through a malicious email attachment or infected website.</p> <p>In some cases, attackers may use a physical keylogger on your device in shape of a malicious USB drive or a customized phone charging cable, etc.</p>

Campaign Analysis

According to Bitdefender analysts, the IP addresses used in the attack originated from Vietnam, while the campaign's primary targets were located in the USA, and thousands of inboxes have received the [phishing email](#).

Attackers leverage the corporate profile of one of Qatar's leading IT and cloud services providers to trap victims into opening a ZIP archive. This archive has an executable file titled "CPMPANY PROFILE.exe."

This file, according to Bitdefender's [blog post](#), loads the notorious Snake Keylogger payload on the targeted system's host. The data is exfiltrated through SMTP.

What is Snake Keylogger?

It is an infamous credential and [info-stealing malware](#) that exfiltrates sensitive data from infected machines. It has screenshot capturing and keyboard logging capabilities. It is a huge threat to enterprises because of its spying and data harvesting features.

In addition to that, it can steal information from system clipboards. It is also called [404 Keylogger](#). The trojan surfaced in 2020 and is currently available at underground marketplaces/message boards for a few hundred dollars. The malware is used commonly in financially motivated campaigns, including identity theft and fraud-based campaigns.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Instagram phishing lure: blue badges
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/thousands-lured-with-blue-badges-in-instagram-phishing-attack/
GIST	<p>A new Instagram phishing campaign is underway, attempting to scam users of the popular social media platform by luring them with a blue-badge offer.</p> <p>Blue badges are highly coveted as Instagram provides them to accounts it verified to be authentic, representing a public figure, celebrity, or brand.</p> <p>The spear emails in the recently observed phishing campaign inform recipients that they Instagram reviewed their accounts and deemed them eligible for a blue badge.</p> <p>Users falling for the scam are urged to fill out a form and claim their verification badge in the next 48 hours.</p> <p>While the campaign shows signs of fraud, the threat actor bets on the carelessness and enthusiasm Instagram users have when faced with the opportunity to upgrade the status of their social account.</p> <h3>Campaign details</h3> <p>The new campaign was spotted by threat analysts at Vade, an AI-based email security service, who reported that the first messages to targets were sent out on July 22.</p> <p>During the deployment, email distribution volumes spiked twice, once on July 28 and again on August 9, 2022, with more than 1,000 phishing messages per day.</p> <p>The messages feature Instagram and Facebook logos and inform the recipient that their account is eligible for a blue badge, urging them to click on an embedded button that would take them to the relevant submission form.</p> <p>The users are warned that if they ignore the message, the form will be permanently deleted in 48 hours, creating a sense of urgency and the illusion of a limited opportunity.</p>

The phishing form is hosted on a domain named “teamcorrectionbadges”, to make it appear as if Instagram uses a separate, dedicated domain to verify users.

The phishing process on that site relies on a three-stage form, each step showing Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, and Meta logos, in an attempt to create a sense of legitimacy.

The first form requests “username”, the second asks the victim to enter “name”, “email”, and “phone number”, while the third and final step requests entering the user “password”, to supposedly verify that they own the account.

Once the victim completes the process, a message informs them that their account is now verified and that the Instagram team will contact them in the next two days. A phony case ID is also presented at this final step.

How Instagram badges work

To understand how you can protect yourself from these scams, it is essential to know how [Instagram’s verification program](#) actually works.

First, the social media platform will never contact you offering a blue badge. Users can only get it by applying themselves.

Secondly, applying for verification is [only possible](#) through the official platform, never by visiting a separate domain.

Thirdly, Instagram blue badges are reserved for [notable](#) public figures, celebrities, and brands, so regular accounts aren’t eligible.

Phishing actors have been taking advantage of the vanity that [characterizes](#) many Instagram users.

Campaigns targeting social media users with phishing emails are [very popular](#) and are not limited to Instagram.

To safeguard your account, Instagram [offers two-factor authentication](#) for additional security, so even if you give away all your details to phishing actors, losing access to your account would be more complicated.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Montenegro suffers ransomware attack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/montenegro-hit-by-ransomware-attack-hackers-demand-10-million/
GIST	<p>The government of Montenegro has provided more information about the attack on its critical infrastructure saying that ransomware is responsible for the damage and disruptions.</p> <p>Public Administration Minister Maras Dukaj stated on local television yesterday that behind the attack is an organized cybercrime group. The effects of the incident continue for the tenth day.</p> <p>The minister added that a "special virus" is used in this attack and there is a ransom demand of \$10 million.</p> <p>Dukaj also added that at this point, the state could not give an estimate of when the services will become available.</p> <p>False allegations and Cuba</p> <p>Previously, Dukaj himself, along with Montenegro's Defense Minister, told local media that they had enough evidence to suspect the cyberattacks were directed by Russian services.</p>

	<p>This gave the incident a geopolitical hue and mobilized the Balkan country's NATO allies to help them with incident response, defense, and remediation.</p> <p>The next day, though, Cuba ransomware gang listed the Parliament of Montenegro (Skupstina) as its victim and claimed to have stolen financial documents, correspondence with banks, balance sheets, tax documents, compensation, and even source code.</p> <p>The data was published on the "free" section of the site, available to any visitor with no restrictions.</p> <p>Cuba ransomware evolution</p> <p>Cuba ransomware has demonstrated notable evolution lately. Three weeks ago, researchers spotted a novel toolset used by the gang along with previously unseen tactics, techniques, and procedures.</p> <p>In June, Cuba ransomware updated its encryptor with additional options and set up a communication channel for "live victim support."</p> <p>Another notable change is observed in the group's targeting scope. In 2021, Cuba focused heavily on U.S.-based organizations.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Neopets hackers had network access 18mo.
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/neopets-hackers-network-access-18-months
GIST	<p>Neopets has released an "Important Announcement" urging its members to update their passwords and confirming that the company's IT systems were compromised.</p> <p>Neopets is a game that lets players create, and care for, virtual pets inside a fantasy world.</p> <p>"It appears that email addresses and passwords used to access Neopets accounts may have been affected," the company explained. "We strongly recommend that you change your Neopets password."</p> <p>The admission comes just weeks after a cyberattacker was reportedly shopping a stolen Neopets database with 69 million member records and the Neopets source code for four bitcoin (which is currently worth less than \$80,000, and falling).</p> <p>The company confirmed that it learned about the attack on the same day the data was put up for sale, July 20.</p> <p>Compromised Neopets member information includes names, email addresses, usernames, dates of birth, gender, IP addresses, Neopets PINs, and hashed passwords, as well as data generated during game play.</p> <p>"As part of our ongoing commitment to the safety and privacy of the Neopets' player information in our care, we have reset players' passwords and are working on adding multifactor authentication to better safeguard your account access," Jim Czulewicz, president and CEO of Neopets owner JumpStart Games, said in a statement.</p> <p>He added, "We have also enhanced the protection of our systems, including by further strengthening our network monitoring, authentication, and system protection."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 NSA, CISA: software supply chain security
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/nsa-and-cisa-share-tips-to-secure-the-software-supply-chain/?&web_view=true

GIST	<p>The U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) have released tips today on securing the software supply chain.</p> <p>This guidance is designed by the Enduring Security Framework (ESF)—a public-private partnership that works to address threats to U.S. critical infrastructure and national security systems—to serve as a collection of suggested practices for software developers.</p> <p>"Securing the Software Supply Chain for Developers was created to help developers achieve security through industry and government-evaluated recommendations," the Department of Defense's intelligence agency said.</p> <p>"Developers will find helpful guidance from NSA and partners on developing secure code, verifying third party components, hardening the build environment, and delivering the code. Until all DevOps are DevSecOps, the software development lifecycle will be at risk."</p> <p>The ESF will release two more advisories coinciding with the software supply chain lifecycle, with the other two parts in this series focusing on software suppliers and customers.</p> <p>The guidance has been released after recent high-profile cyber attacks like the SolarWinds hack have highlighted weaknesses in the software supply chain that nation-state-backed threat groups can easily exploit.</p> <p>Following the snowball effect of the SolarWinds supply-chain attack that led to the compromise of multiple U.S. govt agencies after FireEye revealed its network was breached in December 2020, President Biden signed an executive order in May 2021 to modernize the country's defenses against cyberattacks.</p> <p>The White House released a new Federal strategy in January, pushing the U.S. government to adopt a "zero trust" security model. This was prompted by Biden's executive order and the NSA and Microsoft recommending this approach in February 2021 for large enterprises and critical networks (National Security Systems, Department of Defense, Defense Industrial Base).</p> <p>In May, the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) also released updated guidance on how enterprises can better defend themselves from supply-chain attacks.</p> <p>A Microsoft report from October 2021 also revealed that the Russian-backed Nobelium threat group kept targeting the global I.T. supply after hacking SolarWinds, attacking 140 managed service providers (MSPs) and cloud service providers and breaching at least 14 since May 2021.</p> <p>Microsoft's findings demonstrated the software supply chain had become an increasingly popular target for threat actors since it allows them to compromise a single product and impact numerous downstream companies that use it.</p> <p>The danger behind supply-chain attacks was also made evident in real-world scenarios multiple times since Russian threat actors compromised SolarWinds to infect its downstream customers, including by Kaseya's MSP software which was used to encrypt the systems of over a thousand companies worldwide and by how npm modules have been used to execute remote commands.</p>
Return to Top	<p>You can find detailed information on how to develop secure code, verify third-party components, harden build environments, and deliver code securely in today's advisory [PDF].</p>

HEADLINE	09/01 Ragnar Locker targets critical industries
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/deep-dive-ragnar-locker-ransomware-targeting-critical-industries?&web_view=true

GIST

The Ragnar group, operating Ragnar Locker ransomware, has been active since 2019 targeting critical industries and employing double extortion. In March 2022, the [FBI warned](#) that at least 52 entities across ten critical industry sectors have been affected. In August 2022, the group attacked Greek gas supplier [Desfa](#), and subsequently leaked sensitive data it claimed to have stolen.

Researchers at Cybereason have [analyzed](#) the encryption process of Ragnar Locker.

On execution, Ragnar Locker does a location check. If the location is any country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), execution is terminated.

It then collects host information, including the computer name and user name, and the machine GUID and Windows version. This data is concatenated and concealed by a custom hashing function. A new event is created using the combined hashes as the name. Ragnar Locker then seeks to identify existing file volumes using the Windows API CreateFileW.

A list of services embedded within the Ragnar Locker code is decrypted. This includes vss, sql, memtas, mepocs, sophos, veeam, backup, pulseway, logme, logmein, connectwise, splashtop, kaseya, vmcompute, Hyper-v, vmms, Dfs. If any of these are found as a running service, it is terminated by the malware.

The malware then decrypts an embedded RSA public key and prepares it for use. It decrypts the embedded ransom note and proceeds to delete any shadow copies of the host via vssadmin.exe and Wmic.exe.

In the analyzed sample, the ransom note adds, “Also, all of your sensitive and private information were gathered and if you decide NOT to pay, we will upload it for public view!” The Ragnar Locker data leak site on Tor ([http \[://\] rgleaktxuey67yrgspmhvtnrqtgogur351wdrup4d3igtbm3pupe4lyd \[.\] onion/](http://[redacted]rgleaktxuey67yrgspmhvtnrqtgogur351wdrup4d3igtbm3pupe4lyd[redacted]onion/)) currently lists around 70 claimed victims.

The note demands a ransom of 25 bitcoins, but implies this could be negotiated if contact is made within two days. However, it warns that the ransom will double if there is no contact within 14 days, while the decryption key would be destroyed if no payment agreement isn’t reached within 21 days.

It also adds that the ransom figure has been tailored by the attackers based on the victim’s ‘networks size, number of employees, annual revenue’.

When the ransom note is ready, Ragnar Locker starts the encryption process. Exclusions include the files autoruns.inf, boot.ini, bootfront.bin, bootsect.bak, bootmgr, bootmgr.efi, bootmgfw.efi, desktop.ini, iconcache.db, ntldr, ntuser.dat, ntuser.dat.log, ntuser.ini, thumbs.db; specific processes and objects such as Windows.old, Tor Browser, Internet Explorer, Google, Opera, Opera Software, Mozilla, Mozilla Firefox, \$Recycle.bin, ProgramData, All Users; and files with the extensions .db, .sys, .dll, lnk, .msi, .drv, .exe.

The filenames of other files are sent to the encryption function which encrypts the corresponding file and appends the suffix ‘.ragnar_[hashed computer name]’. After encryption, Ragnar Locker creates a notepad.exe process and displays the ransom note on the user’s screen.

The stolen data used in the double extortion process is exfiltrated continuously up to the point of encryption. Loic Castel, principal security analyst at Cybereason’s Global SOC told SecurityWeek, “In general, ransomware operatives doing double extortion always require full privileges on the network they are looking to encrypt.. Between the initial access phase (when they take control of an asset, for instance through spearphishing) and the encryption phase, they have access to many machines, which they can extract data from and send through exfiltration services / external domains.”

In a timeframe disclosed in the FBI alert, data exfiltration occurred almost six weeks after the initial access, and continued for about ten days before the encryption process began.

	Ragnar Locker primarily targets firms within the critical industries sector. “Ragnar Locker ransomware actors work as part of a ransomware family, frequently changing obfuscation techniques to avoid detection and prevention,” warned the FBI in its March 2022 alert.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 China demands US drop tech export curbs
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/china-demands-us-drop-tech-export-curbs-nvidia-89171998
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- The Chinese government on Thursday called on Washington to repeal its technology export curbs after California-based chip designer Nvidia said a new product might be delayed and some work might be moved out of China.</p> <p>The latest controls add to mounting U.S.-Chinese tension over technology and security. American officials say they need to limit the spread of technology that can be used to make weapons.</p> <p>Nvidia said it was told last week it needs a U.S. government license to export any product with performance equal to its A100 graphics processing chips or better to China, Hong Kong or Russia. It said buyers of the A100, and development of the newer H100, might be affected.</p> <p>But in an amended disclosure Thursday to U.S. securities regulators, the company said the U.S. government was offering some reprieve by authorizing certain chip exports that will enable Nvidia to keep supplying them to American customers through March.</p> <p>The high-end chips are designed to help power data centers and run artificial intelligence applications. The restrictions don't affect Nvidia's better-known products used in video games and automotive technology.</p> <p>Another U.S. chipmaker, Advanced Micro Devices, said Friday it had also received new licensing requirements from the U.S. Department of Commerce blocking the shipment of some of its high-end graphics processors to China and Russia. But AMD said it was unlikely to cause product-development delays or have a material impact on its business.</p> <p>China's Commerce Ministry accused Washington of abusing export controls to limit semiconductor sales to China. It said trade curbs would disrupt supply chains and global economic recovery.</p> <p>“China firmly opposes this,” said a ministry spokesperson, Shu Jueting. “The U.S. side should immediately stop its erroneous practices, treat companies from all countries equally, including from China, and do more to contribute to world economic stability.”</p> <p>U.S. officials increasingly worry about Chinese technology development as both a strategic threat and a potential challenge to American industrial leadership.</p> <p>Washington has tightened controls and lobbied allies to limit Chinese access to the most advanced chips and tools to develop its own. China is spending heavily to develop its fledgling producers but cannot make high-end chips used in the most advanced smartphones and other devices.</p> <p>In a earlier disclosure Wednesday, Nvidia said it may be required to “transition certain operations out of China.” The company said it was asking the U.S. government for exemptions for its development and support activities.</p> <p>It said it would try to meet Chinese customer needs with products that aren’t subject to license requirements. It said the company may seek a license for customers that need them but “has no assurance” the U.S. government will agree.</p> <p>Shares in Nvidia Corp., which is based in Santa Clara, California, lost \$11.57, or almost 8%, to close Thursday at \$139.37.</p>
Return to Top	

Terrorism, Extremism

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	09/02 Afghan mosque blast kills 18
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-explosions-taliban-45f091fe0e898cda4100e8f883f548c6
GIST	<p>HERAT, Afghanistan (AP) — An explosion tore through a crowded mosque in western Afghanistan on Friday, killing at least 18 people, including a prominent cleric, Taliban officials and a local medic said. At least 21 people were hurt.</p> <p>The blast went off in the Guzargah Mosque in the western city of Herat during Friday noon prayers, the highlight of the Muslim religious week when places of worship are particularly crowded.</p> <p>The explosion killed Mujib-ul Rahman Ansari, a prominent cleric who was known across Afghanistan for his criticism of the country's Western-backed governments over the past two decades. Ansari was seen as close to the Taliban, who seized control over the country a year ago as foreign forces withdrew.</p> <p>His death was confirmed by the chief Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid.</p> <p>Ambulances transported 18 bodies and 21 wounded people from the blast to hospitals in Herat, said Mohammad Daud Mohammadi, an official at the Herat ambulance center,</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Friday's blast.</p> <p>Previous mosque attacks have been claimed by the Islamic State extremist group, which has carried out a series of attacks against religious and ethnic minorities in Afghanistan, as well as Taliban targets.</p> <p>The Herat mosque draws followers of Sunni Islam, the dominant stream in Afghanistan that is also followed by the Taliban.</p> <p>In the year since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Islamic State attacked several mosques in suicide attacks during Friday prayers, with a focus on targeting Shiite Muslims. Islamic State followers are also Sunnis and consider Shiites to be infidels.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Al-Shabab attacks central Somalia town
SOURCE	https://allafrica.com/stories/202209020113.html
GIST	<p>Al-Shabaab fighters have attacked a small town in the Galgaduud region in central Somalia amid ongoing military operations against the militant group.</p> <p>Reports from Bahdo area indicate that the militants bombed water wells and telecommunications centers in Marsamge and Cadokibir under Galmudug state.</p> <p>There are reports of casualties as a result of the overnight attack but the details are still murky as local authorities have yet to comment on the incident.</p> <p>Al-Shabaab has lost 100 members in Bahdo after local militia and government forces jointly repelled its attack.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 'Salad bar' extremism on rise in Canada
SOURCE	https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/salad-bar-extremism-mental-health-alberta-1.6570421

GIST

Extremists in Canada are increasingly cherry-picking aspects of various violent ideologies to form their own belief system, in a phenomenon known as "salad-bar extremism," a new report has found.

"This 'salad bar' extremism, originally used to describe an emerging phenomenon in the U.S., is now present in Canada," a report released Thursday by the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV) reads.

Hate, Extremism, and Terrorism In Alberta, Canada, and Beyond measures the shift in activity between 2019 to 2022.

Mike King, director of research at the OPV, said that in the past, there were many distinct ideologies, listing examples such as white supremacy, anti-government extremism and left-wing extremism and extreme misogyny.

"Now we're seeing more and more blurred planes between these ideologies where people are kind of picking and choosing portions of the same ideologies, and putting them together and almost kind of having a tailored extremist ideology of their own," he said.

It's been three years since the OPV – a non-government organization formed to prevent radicalization and challenge extremist views – published its first report about hate-motivated violence, extremism and terrorism in Alberta.

Since then, researchers say much has changed due to the broad social repercussions from events such as the pandemic, protests against public health measures, tense elections in the United States, and the backlash to racial justice movements.

"The structure and landscape of [ideologically motivated violence extremism] actors continues its shift from group-based tactics to lone-actor and small-cell activity, particularly within the realm of xenophobic extremism," the report reads.

Part of the reason for the shift, King hypothesized, is that some of the patriot and militia groups such as The Three Percenters and Proud Boys have been added to Canada's list of terrorist entities.

The designation makes it easier to charge and arrest individuals supporting the group financially and stop finances flowing to the group, King said.

Proud Boys chapters in Alberta have folded or been dissolved since the Capitol riots in the U.S, the report indicates. The report described the Proud Boys as "a traditionalist, neo-fascist chauvinist organization loosely tied to white power."

The report is based on unprecedented access to interviews with members of the RCMP, municipal policing agencies, provincial and federal justice agencies, public safety officials, community leaders, and frontline practitioners, John McCoy, OPV executive director, wrote in an email.

He added that the OPV runs a program called Evolve, where staff work directly with individuals and families looking to disengage from violent extremism. Psychologists and mentors who work with Evolve also contributed to the report.

An increasing number of people gravitating toward forms of extremism have some form of mental health issues, King said.

That creates new challenges, said King.

"Is the response primarily a psychosocial intervention, or is it more a national security response or is it a bit of both? And I think that can be quite complicated because you definitely don't want to be securitizing what is essentially a mental health issue," he said.

"But you also don't want to be medicalizing what is a security issue. So, there's a fine line there, and I think you really need a lot of experts there to help with the assessment of these cases."

[Return to Top](#)

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Climate change toll outpace govt. estimates
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/09/01/costs-climate-change-far-surpass-government-estimates-study-says/
GIST	<p>The economic toll of deadly heat waves, crop-killing droughts and rising seas that each additional ton of carbon dioxide levies on society is much higher than the U.S. government tallies when considering new regulations, according to a new analysis published Thursday.</p> <p>A sobering paper in the journal Nature on the damage caused by climate change brings into relief the threat that higher temperatures pose on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people at home and overseas.</p> <p>The research team's key finding: Each additional ton of carbon dioxide that cars, power plants and other sources add to the atmosphere costs society \$185 — more than triple the federal government's current figure.</p> <p>The new study calculating climate change's economic toll — known as the “social cost of carbon” — could renew pressure on President Biden to hike the federal government's own estimate, a crucial number used by officials when assessing the potential costs and benefits of government regulations.</p> <p>“The bottom line is that our results show that when you fully update the social cost of carbon methodology to the state of the science, it suggests that the existing estimates that are in use by the federal government are vastly underestimating the harm,” said Kevin Rennert, a research fellow at the think tank Resources for the Future and a co-author of the paper.</p> <p>Here's more about what it all means:</p> <p>The social what of what?</p> <p>With wildfires burning more ferociously, droughts lasting longer and hurricanes becoming more intense, scientists agree the monetary toll of climate change will be enormous. The social cost of carbon is an attempt to put a dollar figure on that destruction.</p> <p>The idea for the metric came to fruition during President Barack Obama's administration, which at one point settled on a cost of roughly \$51 a ton when adjusted for inflation. With nations releasing billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the air every year, the toll adds up pretty quickly.</p> <p>But many experts thought the Obama-era figure might be lowballing the actual costs. In early 2017, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recommended a major update to the metric to make the calculation more transparent and scientifically sound.</p> <p>Donald Trump became president a week after the release of the NAS report, and his administration wasted little time in disbanding the interagency working group on the carbon price. By excluding damages of climate change abroad, the Trump team slashed the estimated cost of each ton of carbon pollution to between \$1 and \$7 per ton.</p> <p>After Joe Biden took office, the White House reestablished the working group and told federal agencies to return to using the Obama-era price of \$51 per ton — at least temporarily, promising to update the cost. In May, the Supreme Court allowed Biden's deputies to continue using that higher interim estimate.</p>

What are some of the big costs of climate change?

Temperature-related mortality extracts a particularly high cost, according to the research group led by experts at Resources for the Future and the University of California at Berkeley.

In the United States, extreme heat is the [most fatal form of weather disaster](#), with hundreds of Americans losing their lives last summer. Any additional hospitalization or death as temperatures rise is, of course, a tragedy — but it's also one to which economists are able to assign a dollar value.

Another major concern is crop failure. Altered yields of rice, soy, maize and wheat as weather patterns shift could upend global trade and have a far worse economic impact than previously thought, according to the team.

In Thursday's analysis, researchers also lowered the "discount rate" — a method of measuring future costs and benefits — on the dangers of sea level rise and other effects of climate change. A lower discount rate implies a higher cost to inaction.

Whatever number policymakers use, the idea is to provide them a metric by which to tally the ongoing costs and benefits of a regulation or infrastructure project years or decades into the future. Ideally, the calculations offer a worthwhile road map of whether implementing certain policies will pay off down the road.

To make the dizzying set of calculations behind Thursday's paper, the researchers gathered specialists — including climate scientists, economists and statisticians — from a dozen institutions to assess the latest science.

"When we started this project, we knew that we would only succeed by assembling a team of leading researchers in each discipline to contribute their expertise," said David Anthoff, an environmental economist at UC-Berkeley and another study co-author.

The team emphasized there is still a wide range of uncertainty in their estimate. And there are plenty of negative impacts they did not assess, including the potential decline of ecosystems, loss of labor productivity and outbreak of war.

Is the social cost of carbon controversial?

You betcha.

For well over a decade, many elected officials and academics have debated how to properly quantify the economic costs of greenhouse gas emissions — and how much the government should rely on such estimates.

On one end of the spectrum are folks who reject the utility of such an approach altogether. When President Biden boosted the figure to \$51, Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) called the move "a backdoor carbon tax."

"Since the president can't rationalize the crippling costs of his climate policies," Barrasso said in a statement, "he needs to exaggerate the benefits."

This summer, a group of conservative lawmakers on Capitol Hill [introduced](#) a bill that would prohibit the federal government from using the social cost of carbon in the rulemaking process.

Nick Loris, vice president of public policy at the Conservative Coalition for Climate Solutions, or C3 Solutions, has raised a more nuanced set of concerns.

"I do believe there's a social cost of carbon and that increased carbon in the atmosphere increases costs to the economy and our ecology and the planet, and those damages will likely get worse in the future if we

don't mitigate emissions," Loris said. He also said the team behind Thursday's paper is rigorous and credible.

But the problem, he said, is that even peer-reviewed academic literature contains a range of different estimates for the true costs, depending on assumptions and methodologies and the possibilities of wild swings in policy between administration risks creating uncertainty among regulated industries.

It's important to analyze the potential future economic damages posed by a warming planet and a worthwhile data point for policymakers and regulators, Loris said. But, he added, "it can't be relied on as the singular number to justify a regulation or policy action."

Why is the social cost of carbon important?

The value is an essential input in a lot of federal policymaking — whether to drill for oil, to boost the energy efficiency of appliances, to allow a power plant to continue burning coal. Setting the cost of carbon high would encourage clean energy projects, deter new coal leasing on federal acreage and influence the type of steel used in taxpayer-funded infrastructure.

"Getting the number right is critical," Tamma Carleton said in an email. Carleton is an assistant professor of economics at the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

"A value that is too low means that we face excessive climate change risks, but a value that is too high imposes unwarranted emissions mitigation costs on the economy."

She said Thursday's paper includes the most up-to-date science and "marks a substantial improvement" upon estimates previously developed by the U.S. government.

The Biden administration "remains committed to accounting for the costs of greenhouse gas emissions as accurately as possible," said a spokeswoman for the White House's Office of Management and Budget. But the office did not say when it would make an update to the figure.

Even as the Trump administration was drastically reducing the social cost of carbon, Democratic-leaning states have pressed ahead with their own policies.

In late 2020, for instance, New York adopted a "[value of carbon guidance](#)" ranging between \$79 and \$125 that it will apply to policies and programs going forward. And other states such as Illinois, Colorado, Washington and Minnesota use the metric for various types of policy analysis or implementation, including in the electricity sector.

The city of Minneapolis also voted to impose a \$42 per ton estimate for the costs of climate change several years back, though as Mayor Jacob Frey told The Washington Post [in an interview last year](#), "Carbon does not respect borders."

The emissions that come from Phoenix or Baltimore or Texas, he said, impact life in Minneapolis and other places. That is why a federal standard that factors in the true costs of climate change is essential, he said.

"It really should be baked into every decision."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/02 New Zealand: warmest, wettest winter
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/02/new-zealand-weather-warmest-wettest-winter-on-record-aotearoa
GIST	New Zealand has had its warmest and wettest winter on record, with one meteorologist describing it as "mother nature's way of expressing she has a fever".

For the three months to the end of August 2022, the average temperature was 9.8C, according to New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (Niwa).

That figure was 1.4C above the 1981-2010 average from Niwa's seven-station temperature series, which began in 1909, surpassing [last year's winter record of 1.3C](#).

It is the third consecutive year the temperature record has been broken and climate change was having a significant impact, said Ben Noll, a Niwa meteorologist.

"The warmth is here to stay," he said. "We are not seeing anything at least in the next couple of seasons that will suggest we're going to be seeing cooler than average temperatures."

It was not just the winter season in which temperatures were consistently high, he said.

"We feel like a broken record ... but this is mother nature's way of expressing she has a fever – she is running a higher temperature and it is pretty concerning to see that, successively, season after season."

This year's winter was also the first on record where the temperature rise exceeded 1.2C for all three months of the season, relative to the long-term average.

Of the 10 warmest winters on record, six have occurred since 2013. This year, 50 locations experienced record temperatures and another 33 experienced near-record temperatures.

"The warmth was really overwhelming ... it was certainly widespread in terms of the season as a whole," said Nava Fedaeff, another Niwa forecaster.

Wairoa, on the east coast of the North Island, recorded the highest temperature of the winter, with 24.3C on 20 August, while the lowest was in Aoraki/Mount Cook on 17 July at -11.6C.

It was also the wettest winter since records began in 1971, which was "probably not a surprise to anyone", Fedaeff said.

"We had extreme rainfall. There were really few places in the country that didn't receive some of that rainfall."

Noll added the atmospheric river that swept over the country was unusual for winter. It was the strongest on record for August and second strongest for winter since at least 1959.

"The characteristics of this event were more typical of what we expect in January, February or March," he said.

A state of emergency was called in Nelson, Tasman, the West Coast and Marlborough after the torrential downpours, with Nelson in particular affected by severe flooding as the Maitai River burst its banks.

"The river flows well exceeded the previous record," Noll said.

The record-breaking warmth did not stop at land-based temperatures, with sea surface temperatures also exceeding previous records after a third straight year of La Niña conditions.

Marine heatwave conditions in the eastern Tasman Sea and the Coral Sea not only contributed to warmer temperatures on land but also provided extra moisture to low-pressure systems approaching the country.

"You can really see how New Zealand's weather ... was connected to the tropics," Noll said. "That resulted in atmospheric rivers and heavy rainfall throughout the season and some of that is [now] spilling over into the spring."

HEADLINE	09/01 Climate change: Zimbabwe moves animals
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/1/zimbabwe-moves-2500-wild-animals-due-to-climate-ch/
GIST	<p>HARARE, Zimbabwe — A helicopter herds thousands of impalas into an enclosure. A crane hoists sedated upside-down elephants into trailers. Hordes of rangers drive other animals into metal cages and a convoy of trucks starts a journey of about 700 kilometers (435 miles) to take the animals to their new home.</p> <p>Zimbabwe has begun moving more than 2,500 wild animals from a southern reserve to one in the country's north to rescue them from drought, as the ravages of climate change replace poaching as the biggest threat to wildlife.</p> <p>About 400 elephants, 2,000 impalas, 70 giraffes, 50 buffaloes, 50 wildebeest, 50 zebras, 50 elands, 10 lions and a pack of 10 wild dogs are among the animals being moved from Zimbabwe's Save Valley Conservancy to three conservancies in the north - Sapi, Matusadonha and Chizarira - in one of southern Africa's biggest live animal capture and translocation exercises.</p> <p>"Project Rewild Zambezi," as the operation is called, is moving the animals to an area in the Zambezi River valley to rebuild the wildlife populations there.</p> <p>It's the first time in 60 years that Zimbabwe has embarked on such a mass internal movement of wildlife. Between 1958 and 1964, when the country was white-minority-ruled Rhodesia, more than 5,000 animals were moved in what was called "Operation Noah." That operation rescued wildlife from the rising water caused by the construction of a massive hydro-electric dam on the Zambezi River that created one of the world's largest man-made lakes, Lake Kariba.</p> <p>This time it's the lack of water that has made it necessary to move wildlife as their habitat has become parched by prolonged drought, said Tinashe Farawo, spokesman for the Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.</p> <p>The parks agency issued permits to allow the animals to be moved to avert "a disaster from happening," said Farawo.</p> <p>"We are doing this to relieve pressure. For years we have fought poaching and just as we are winning that war, climate change has emerged as the biggest threat to our wildlife," Farawo told The Associated Press.</p> <p>"Many of our parks are becoming overpopulated and there is little water or food. The animals end up destroying their own habitat, they become a danger unto themselves and they encroach neighboring human settlements for food resulting in incessant conflict," he said.</p> <p>One option would be culling to reduce the numbers of wildlife, but conservation groups protest that such killings are cruel. Zimbabwe last did culling in 1987, said Farawo.</p> <p>The effects of climate change on wildlife is not isolated to Zimbabwe. Across Africa, national parks that are home to myriad wildlife species such as lions, elephants and buffaloes are increasingly threatened by below-average rainfall and new infrastructure projects. Authorities and experts say drought has seriously threatened species like rhinos, giraffes and antelope as it reduces the amount of food available.</p> <p>For example, a recent study conducted in South Africa's Kruger National Park linked extreme weather events to the loss of plants and animals, unable to cope with the drastic conditions and lack of water due to longer dry spells and hotter temperatures.</p> <p>The mass movement is supported by the Great Plains Foundation, a non-profit organization that works "to conserve and expand natural habitats in Africa through innovative conservation initiatives," according to its website. The organization is working with the Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management</p>

Authority, local experts, the University of Washington-Seattle's Center for Environmental Forensic Science and Oxford University's Department of Zoology, according to the website.

One of the new homes for the animals moved in Zimbabwe is Sapi Reserve. the privately-run 280,000-acre private concession is east of Mana Pools National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its splendid setting along the Zambezi River that forms the border between Zimbabwe with Zambia.

Sapi "is the perfect solution for many reasons," Great Plains chief executive officer Dereck Joubert said on the foundation's website.

"This reserve forms the middle-Zambezi biosphere, totaling 1.6 million acres," wrote Joubert. "From the 1950s until we took it over in 2017, decades of hunting had decimated wildlife populations in Sapi Reserve. We are rewilding and restoring the wild back to what it once was."

[Return to Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Idaho police: 'skittles', 'rainbow' fentanyl
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/idaho/north-idaho-new-fentanyl-pills-skittles-rainbow/293-f46a4fb1-95af-4409-a4c7-c7020ea1d104?ref=exit-recirc
GIST	<p>COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — The Idaho State Police (ISP) is warning parents about new types of fentanyl pills that look like candy being used in North Idaho.</p> <p>Over the weekend, the Coeur d'Alene Police seized about 50 multi-colored pills. Two new types of pills are called 'Skittles,' which resemble pieces of brightly colored candy, and 'rainbow,' which are fentanyl pills that are usually chalky or in powder form.</p> <p>It is still unknown if this multi-colored fentanyl is targeting teens, but ISP is warning parents to be aware of this drug, as it is different than what officials have seen in past years. These fentanyl pills can be in many forms and colors including counterfeit pills, powder and chalk-like blocks.</p> <p>"We want to make sure that the public is aware of this change, specifically parents. So that when they see these multicolored pills they are able to identify them as fentanyl," Idaho State Police Capt. John Kempf said.</p> <p>Officials said there is no indication that the new form of fentanyl is more powerful. However, several overdoses, including fatal overdoses in children as young as 15 have been documented in the area.</p> <p>According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drug overdose deaths are the leading killer of Americans between 18 and 45 years old.</p> <p>In 2021, more than 100,000 Americans and 353 people from Idaho died as a result of drug overdose. Synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, accounted for more than three-quarters of these deaths.</p> <p>Marsha Malsam lost her 26-year-old nephew, Rayce, to a fentanyl overdose in 2016. She described him as tender-hearted and someone who always put others before himself.</p> <p>"Rayce passed away six years ago, so Fentanyl was just on the rise then. It's a shock, you didn't know about it, we haven't heard about it and we didn't know how to help Rayce when we did start having concerns," she said. "You don't want that happening to any family member."</p>

	<p>Because of the severity of this threat, the Idaho State Police Fentanyl Education Project (IFEP) offers presentations about the dangers of fentanyl in the communities and they are encouraging parents and children to attend.</p> <p>"I urge all Idahoans to be on the lookout for fentanyl and respect its highly toxic nature. Fentanyl is commonly disguised in fake prescription pills," Kempf said. "If you find pills not dispersed by a licensed pharmacist, assume they are fake and potentially lethal."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/02 'Red flag' laws get little use
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/buffalo-supermarket-shooting-highland-park-july-4-gun-violence-chicago-politics-5165bbcd8771ebf09e7641674d0de9a?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=TopNews&utm_campaign=position_1
GIST	<p>Chicago is one of the nation's gun violence hotspots and a seemingly ideal place to employ Illinois' "red flag" law that allows police to step in and take firearms away from people who threaten to kill. But amid more than 8,500 shootings resulting in 1,800 deaths since 2020, the law was used there just four times.</p> <p>It's a pattern that's played out in New Mexico, with nearly 600 gun homicides during that period and a mere eight uses of its red flag law. And in Massachusetts, with nearly 300 shooting homicides and just 12 uses of its law.</p> <p>An Associated Press analysis found many U.S. states barely use the red flag laws touted as the most powerful tool to stop gun violence before it happens, a trend blamed on a lack of awareness of the laws and resistance by some authorities to enforce them even as shootings and gun deaths soar.</p> <p>AP found such laws in 19 states and the District of Columbia were used to remove firearms from people 15,049 times since 2020, fewer than 10 per 100,000 adult residents. Experts called that woefully low and not nearly enough to make a dent in gun violence, considering the millions of firearms in circulation and countless potential warning signs law enforcement officers encounter from gun owners every day.</p> <p>"It's too small a pebble to make a ripple," Duke University psychologist Jeffrey Swanson, who has studied red flag gun surrender orders across the nation, said of the AP tally. "It's as if the law doesn't exist."</p> <p>"The number of people we are catching with red flags is likely infinitesimal," added Indiana University law professor Jody Madeira, who like other experts who reviewed AP's findings wouldn't speculate how many red flag removal orders would be necessary to make a difference.</p> <p>The search for solutions comes amid a string of mass shootings in Buffalo, New York, Uvalde, Texas, and Highland Park, Illinois, and a spike in gun violence not seen in decades: 27,000 deaths so far this year, following 45,000 deaths each of the past two years.</p> <p>AP's count, compiled from inquiries and Freedom of Information Law requests, showed wide disparities in how the laws were applied from state to state, county to county, most without regard to population or crime rates.</p> <p>Florida led with 5,800 such orders, or 34 per 100,000 adult residents, but that is due mostly to aggressive enforcement in a few counties that don't include Miami-Dade and others with more gun killings. More than a quarter of Illinois' slim 154 orders came from one suburban county that makes up just 7% of the state's population. California had 3,197 orders but was working through a backlog of three times that number of people barred from owning guns under a variety of measures who had not yet surrendered them.</p> <p>And a national movement among politicians and sheriffs that has declared nearly 2,000 counties as "Second Amendment Sanctuaries," opposing laws that infringe on gun rights, may have affected red flag enforcement in several states. In Colorado, 37 counties that consider themselves "sanctuaries" issued just</p>

45 surrender orders in the two years through last year, a fifth fewer than non-sanctuary counties did per resident. New Mexico and Nevada reported only about 20 orders combined.

“The law shouldn’t even be there in the first place,” argued Richard Mack, a former Arizona sheriff who heads the pro-gun Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association. “You’re taking away someone’s property and means of self-defense.”

Red flag laws, most of which came into effect over the last four years, allow police officers who believe gun owners are an imminent danger to themselves or others to petition a judge to order firearms surrendered or, barring that, seized for an “emergency” period, typically two weeks. The judge can then convene a court hearing in which petitioners present evidence to withhold weapons longer, typically a year, and the owner can argue against that.

AP’s tally counts an emergency order that is followed by a longer one as a single order if they involve the same gun owner. In rare cases where no one asked for an emergency order and only a longer one was requested and granted, that also counts as a single order. Several states reported incomplete data.

Some states also allow family members of gun owners, school officials, work colleagues or doctors to ask for gun removal orders, also known as extreme risk protection orders. But data reviewed by the AP show nearly all petitions in several states were initiated by police, possibly because, as several surveys have shown, few people outside law enforcement are even aware the laws exist.

The recent spike in shootings has brought renewed attention to red flag laws, with states including Alaska, Pennsylvania and Kentucky introducing legislation to add them. The Biden administration is seeking to foster wider use of red flag laws by allocating money in a newly passed federal gun law to help spread the word about such measures.

An AP-NORC poll in late July found 78% of U.S. adults strongly or somewhat favor red flag laws, but the backlash against them has been intense in some states, particularly in rural areas. Opponents argue that allowing judges to rule on gun seizures in initial emergency petitions before full hearings violates due process rights, though court cases claiming this have generally found the laws constitutional.

Many police believe seizing guns can also be dangerous and unnecessary, even as a last resort, especially in sparsely populated areas where they know many of the residents with mental health issues, said Tony Mace, head of the New Mexico Sheriffs’ Association, which lobbied against the state’s law.

“You’re showing up with 10 to 15 law enforcement officers and coming in the middle of the night and kicking in the door, and it’s already a dangerous environment,” said Mace, sheriff of Cibola County, a sanctuary county with just one order since 2020. “You’re dealing with someone in crisis and elevating it even more.”

One fierce gun rights defender who still aggressively uses the law is Polk County, Florida, Sheriff Grady Judd, who says he doesn’t let his beliefs stand in the way of moving fast when gun owners threaten violence.

“We’re not going to wait for an Uvalde, Texas, or a Parkland or a Columbine if we have the information and people say that they’re going to shoot or kill,” said Judd, who enforced 752 orders since 2020 in a county of 725,000 residents, a tally that’s more than the total orders for 15 entire states. “We’re going to use the tools that the state gave us.”

Florida’s traditionally pro-gun Republican-led legislature passed its red flag law in 2019 following revelations police failed to act on repeated threats by an expelled student who would go on to carry out the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland that left 17 people dead.

A recent high-profile example of a red flag law not being used was for the 21-year-old gunman accused of fatally shooting seven people and injuring dozens more at a Fourth of July parade in the Chicago suburb of

Highland Park. Robert E. Crimo III drew police attention three years earlier when he threatened to “kill everyone” in his house and officers acknowledged going to the home several times previously because of a “history of attempts” to take his own life.

But Highland Park police never requested a gun surrender order, saying there was no gun belonging to Crimo to take away at the time, even though the law has a provision to block threatening people from making future purchases, too.

Illinois state Rep. Denyse Stoneback said there has clearly been a problem with awareness of the law among those tasked with carrying it out. “We’d go to police departments and they didn’t know anything about it,” said the Democrat who helped push through a bill last year providing \$1 million in police red flag law training.

Asked why Chicago had so few red flag firearm restraining orders, police spokesman Thomas Ahern said many of the city’s gun killings are committed with illegally owned firearms.

But Ahern emphasized it remained a priority of the department to increase its awareness and use of the red flag law. “If we are able to prevent one citizen from getting hurt or killed that’s a law worth having and definitely not a low priority,” he said.

In New York, a red flag-type situation that wasn’t covered under the state’s law nonetheless led to a spike in red flag gun surrender orders.

Payton Gendron was a 17-year-old high school senior last year when he was investigated by New York’s State Police and ordered hospitalized for a mental health evaluation for typing into an economics class online program that his future plans included “murder-suicide.” But since he was a minor, he wasn’t covered under the state’s red flag law and it didn’t prevent him from later buying the high-powered rifle authorities say he used to kill 10 Black people in a racially-motivated shooting at Buffalo supermarket in May.

Since then, New York has seen 779 gun surrender orders under its red flag law, equal to nearly half of all its orders since the measure took effect three years ago.

Several experts said it’s impossible to come up with an ideal number of red flag orders and misleading to compare states by orders because of the widely varying rates of gun ownership and gun homicides and suicides, among other stats.

Another complicating factor is that some states have stricter gun ownerships rules and multiple ways to seize firearms. In California, for instance, guns can be taken away through domestic violence restraining orders, civil harassment protection orders and school violence prevention orders in addition to the red flag law.

Still, experts consulted by AP agreed more could be done to enforce red flag laws given the prevalence of guns and the millions of gun owners that national studies suggest could be dangerous to themselves and others. In red flag states alone, figures compiled by the Gun Violence Archive show at least 21,100 homicides and 47,000 injuries during the 2½ years covered by AP’s count.

Several studies suggest red flag laws can be particularly effective in preventing gun suicides, which kill about 20,000 people a year. A Duke University study of Connecticut’s-first-in-the-nation red flag law in 1999 estimated that for every 10 to 20 surrender orders a life from a potential suicide was saved. A study of Indiana’s law came up with a similar ratio.

While the impact of red flag laws on homicides is less well researched, studies suggest many mass shootings could be avoided if the laws were implemented aggressively. A study by the gun-control advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety showed perpetrators exhibited dangerous warning signs before more than half of the mass shootings in the dozen years through 2020 that accounted for 596 deaths.

Such warning signs have led to many opportunities to stop gun violence, as well as missed chances.

In Colorado in 2020, police seized 59 guns from a man who complained of hit men coming to get him, bragged about shooting someone and repeatedly threatened his ex-wife.

In New Jersey in 2019, police took seven guns from a man threatening on Facebook to attack a Walmart.

And in Washington state in 2018, police removed 12 guns from the home of a man who posted on social media about killing Jews in a synagogue and kids in a school.

None of those threatened shootings happened.

But in Indianapolis in 2020, failure to employ all aspects of a red flag law resulted in disaster. After 18-year-old Brandon Hole's mother alerted police that he was threatening to commit "suicide by cop," police seized his pump-action shotgun. A county prosecutor could have gone further under the law to argue before a judge that Hole should be barred from possessing or buying a gun, but that never happened.

A few months later, Hole bought two AR-style rifles at a gun store, turning to his mother and saying, "They don't have a flag on me." Several months after that, he fatally shot eight employees in a FedEx warehouse where he had worked and injured seven more before killing himself.

"I feel the state of Indiana is an accessory to murder," a wounded Angela Hughley told the Indianapolis Star shortly after the shooting.

Amber Clark, a librarian in Sacramento, California, might still be alive today if police had acted on a tip that Ronald Seay was armed and dangerous.

The gunman's twin brother called police in 2018 warning that Seay, who had a history of mental illness and trouble with police, was making violent threats and had two semiautomatic pistols. But the police never went to a judge to ask for a gun surrender order or tell the sibling that he could do that himself.

A few weeks later, Seay unloaded 11 bullets into Clark's face and head at pointblank range outside the Sacramento library.

"It is obvious to me and my family that the application of California's red flag law in this case would have saved two lives – Amber's and the shooter's – and prevented immeasurable grief," said her husband, Kelly Clark. "My wife would still be alive and the killer would have received the help he needed instead of being condemned to life in prison."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 NC school stabbing attack: 1 dead, 2 injured
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/01/us/jacksonville-northside-high-school-stabbing-dead/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)One student is dead and two others were injured after an apparent stabbing attack Thursday at a high school in Jacksonville, North Carolina.</p> <p>Jacksonville Police said a student resource officer at Northside High School requested assistance around 7 a.m. after a physical altercation between students broke out inside one of the school's common areas.</p> <p>Two students were stabbed and taken to a local hospital for emergency care, where one died from their injuries. Both students were minors and their identities will not be released.</p> <p>"The school resource officer who was on campus rapidly responded to the scene, with the first SRO arriving within 20 seconds and he was able to take someone in custody," Jacksonville Police Chief Mike Yaniero said in a press conference.</p>

A teacher is believed to have been injured in the incident, but not from being stabbed, and received medical attention on the scene, according to Yaniero. He did not disclose the nature of the teacher's injuries but said no one else is believed to have been injured.

The chief also did not disclose the weapon used, only saying it was a stabbing incident. There is still an active scene at the school and the investigation is ongoing, Yaniero said, adding that charges are forthcoming.

"I have spoken with Jacksonville Police Chief Yaniero and offered state assistance in addition to the SBI to help with the aftermath of this tragedy," North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper [said on Facebook](#). "Our prayers are with all the students, educators, families and the community."

The incident occurred only four days after students returned to school for the new school year. Northside High School, located in Onslow County, has about 952 enrolled students, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

Northside High School students will have a virtual day on Friday and will return to in-person classes on Tuesday, Onslow County Schools superintendent Dr. Barry Collins said in the press conference.

Melissa Brison Mack, who has three children who attend the high school just one mile away from their home, said the incident "panicked" her.

Her children, who are in 9th, 10th, and 11th grade, had just gotten to school 15 minutes before classes were supposed to start when the incident took place.

"They were arriving as the chaos happened and luckily didn't witness what happened," Mack told CNN. "My oldest hunkered down in a friend's car in the school parking lot and my younger two waited in the parking lot until they were instructed to head to the cafeteria for lockdown."

The mother of six said she knew something bad happened when the school called parents asking them not to bring their children to school if they hadn't yet.

"I'm so happy they are safe but I'm not even sure how to tell them to protect themselves at school," Mack said. "I was just having a conversation with my oldest on the way to dance classes earlier this week about what she would do if there was a shooter and she had a good plan. But then this happens and you realize school just isn't a safe place them to be if someone can pull out a knife on them."

Superintendent Collins spoke at the press conference regarding safety measures the school district implements to protect students and staff, specifically by increasing the presence of student resource officers.

"We've put a lot of resources into the safety and security of our school district this past year, with the addition of several SROs," Collins said. "There are other measures that we've taken, in terms of the swipe in door locks, cameras, and the ring-in, but there are probably some other things we're going to have to look at and those are the types of things we'll be looking at in the next days and weeks."

However, Mack say it's not enough and is urging the school to implement better policies to keep their children safe, such as a clear book bag policy or metal detectors at the front doors of the school.

"Most schools need to crack down more, this is life or death," Mack said. "To the parents this happened to, I'm so sorry that they didn't have the opportunity I did to pick their child up today."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 'Sanctuary community' more crime?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/community-family/new-york-city-most-dangerous-sanctuary-community-america

(The Center Square) – As Texas Gov. Greg Abbott continues to bus foreign nationals who've entered the U.S. illegally to New York City, a new report reveals that the Big Apple is the most dangerous so-called "Sanctuary Community" in America.

According to data compiled by the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI), the 10 most dangerous Sanctuary Communities are New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Seattle, Wake County, North Carolina, Middlesex County, New Jersey, and Portland.

"These communities have earned their places on this list because of incredibly poor leadership at the city, county and state levels," Dale Wilcox, IRLI's executive director and general counsel, said. "Data overwhelmingly shows that sanctuary policies lead to more crime, fear and death. The leaders of these communities should not escape accountability for the damage they have caused. Their residents deserve much more."

Sanctuary Communities refer to those where government policies discourage law enforcement officials from complying with federal immigration law, according to the Franklin County Law Library, located in Columbus, Ohio, which has implemented sanctuary city policies. Such communities generally refuse to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to detain and remove aliens.

But these policies "only provide sanctuary to criminals, not to immigrant communities," Tom Homan, IRLI senior fellow and former acting director of ICE said. "Immigrant communities don't want criminals in their neighborhoods either. Victims and witnesses of crime don't want the offender back in their communities to seek revenge. All communities deserve protection from criminals but sanctuary policies put immigrant communities at greater risk of crime."

According to the report, New York City ranks as the most dangerous city because of its policies. It cites numerous examples, including city officials not complying with ICE subpoenas related to criminal aliens in New York City; city officials releasing more than 7,500 people onto the streets with murder and sex abuse convictions; and prohibiting residents from using the term, "illegal alien," threatening them with fines up to \$250,000.

Second most dangerous is Los Angeles, which has "become a safe haven for criminals of all stripes since District Attorney George Gascon was sworn into office in late 2020," the report states. It points to county officials voting in 2020 "to pay \$14 million to illegal aliens who had previously been held in detention," and to Mayor Eric Garcetti pledging to defy federal immigration authorities.

It also points to a report that found that in fiscal 2019, ICE sought "to arrest 11,000 illegal aliens in Los Angeles, but only 5 percent were turned over;" and "84.2 percent of illegal aliens ICE sought to remove from California were allowed to stay."

Chicago, the third most dangerous according to the report, "has become a lawless hellscape" under Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who's "maintained its commitment to be a haven for criminal aliens seeking to avoid accountability from federal immigration laws," the report states.

In 2020, Lightfoot signed an executive order making "illegal aliens eligible for all city benefits," and a city ordinance prohibiting city officials "from cooperating with ICE to detain illegal aliens, even if the alien is in the city's gang database or is facing criminal charges." In 2019, Cook County District Attorney Kimberly Foxx also hired an advisor to shield criminal aliens from deportation.

Requests for comment from the mayor's offices in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago were not immediately returned.

Fifth-worst San Francisco dropped from its 2019 most dangerous city ranking, not because it improved, the report notes, but because "the cities above it have become comparatively worse."

	<p>Prior to California becoming a “Sanctuary State” after the passing of SB 54, the San Francisco Sheriff’s Department refused to honor more than 530 federal immigration hold requests, the report notes. Among them, 345 were classified as threat level 1 and 2 offenses, including espionage, terrorist threats, arson/incendiary devices, bombing offenses, homicide, kidnapping, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, sale and possession of drugs, money laundering, burglary, fraud and forgery.</p> <p>U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who is from San Francisco, has previously pushed back against ICE deportations, asking, “In terms of interior enforcement, what is the purpose? What is the point?”</p> <p>The point is national security, Gov. Abbott argues. More than 80 terrorists on the FBI’s Terrorist Watchlist “have been encountered along our southern border since President [Joe] Biden took office,” Abbott said. The watchlist is a federal database that compiles all known or suspected terrorists, most of whom aren’t U.S. citizens.</p> <p>Biden’s “refusal to secure the border is a direct threat to our national security,” Abbott said. “Texas is stepping up to protect Americans from these dangerous criminals.”</p> <p>Since Abbott launched Texas’ border security effort, Operation Lone Star, law enforcement officials have apprehended more than 297,200 people who’ve illegally entered Texas, made more than 19,000 criminal arrests, more than 16,400 felony charges and seized more than 335.5 million lethal doses of fentanyl.</p> <p>Texas has also bused nearly 10,000 people from the southern border to the sanctuary cities of New York City (1,500) and Washington, D.C. (7,400).</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Seattle homicides highest month since 2008
SOURCE	https://katv.com/news/nation-world/august-ends-with-10-homicides-in-seattle-highest-in-one-month-since-2008-chinatown-international-district-mayor-bruce-harrell-gun-violence-shootings-police-department-crime-dashboard-community-watch-group
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (KOMO) — Homicides in Seattle's Chinatown International District are putting even more strain on those who run businesses there.</p> <p>“It’s kind of frustrating to deal with this kind of stuff as long as we’re trying to survive. We’re trying to survive,” said Eric Chan, owner of Jade Garden Restaurant.</p> <p>Chan and his family have owned Jade Garden for nearly two decades and said this year has been especially hard.</p> <p>“I hear a lot of shootings here and there, random gunshots,” said Chan.</p> <p>According to the Seattle Police Department’s crime dashboard, from the start of the year all the way until the end of July, there have been six homicides in the Chinatown International District.</p> <p>“Kind of a no surprise, especially the uptick in public safety,” said Chan.</p> <p>This year, in just the month of August, SPD says there have been 10 homicides in Seattle. That’s the highest the city has seen on record in a single month since 2008.</p> <p>The last high was June of last year with nine homicides.</p> <p>KOMO reached out to Mayor Bruce Harrell’s office to see what the plan is to curb violence. A spokesperson sent a statement that reads, in part:</p> <p><i>The council recently passed the mayor's comprehensive recruitment and retention plan to retain and hire more officers, which is critical for improved response times and thorough investigations.</i></p>

	<p>Tanya Woo is a volunteer with the district's Community Watch Group.</p> <p>"I don't feel like the city has a plan, and I don't think the city's plan of more policing is the right plan," said Woo.</p> <p>She said other helpful resources need to be devoted to communities.</p> <p>"I think there need to be more community-based interventions, more community programs, more social workers on the streets to treat the symptoms of violence," said Woo.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	09/01 CBP frontline: surging fentanyl seizures
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/cbp-on-front-line-of-opioid-crisis-as-fentanyl-seizures-surge/
GIST	<p>This Overdose Awareness Week comes as U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported surging fentanyl seizures in July even as cocaine seizures sharply dropped this summer, and as fentanyl seizures this fiscal year are on track to exceed last year's number.</p> <p>"A decade ago, we didn't even know about fentanyl, and now it's a national crisis," said U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California Randy Grossman. "The amount of fentanyl we are seizing at the border is staggering. The number of fentanyl seizures and fentanyl-related deaths in our district are unprecedented."</p> <p>In July, nationwide seizures of cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl, and marijuana decreased one percent by weight compared to June, according to CBP. Cocaine seizures decreased 56 percent, while methamphetamine increased 15 percent and heroin seizures increased 8 percent. Fentanyl seizures soared with an increase of 203 percent.</p> <p>Marijuana has been lagging behind fiscal year 2021 numbers, with nearly 120,000 pounds seized this fiscal year as of Aug. 3 compared to more than 319,000 pounds seized in FY 2021, according to CBP drug seizure data covering the Border Patrol and Office of Field Operations (OFO). The current fiscal year ends Sept. 30.</p> <p>As of Aug. 3, more than 148,000 pounds of methamphetamine have been seized by CBP this fiscal year compared to nearly 192,000 pounds in FY 2021. More than 1,500 pounds of heroin have been seized, compared to 5,400 pounds in 2021. Last fiscal year, more than 97,000 pounds of cocaine got seized, and so far this fiscal year nearly 54,000 pounds have been pulled in.</p> <p>Meanwhile, as of the beginning of August fentanyl was on track to pass 2021 seizures, with 11,203.11 pounds seized last fiscal year and more than 10,600 pounds seized so far this fiscal year.</p> <p>CBP's Air and Marine Operations (AMO) has already seized more fentanyl this fiscal year than in 2021: 1,108 pounds as of Aug. 3, compared to 786 pounds last fiscal year.</p> <p>AMO has seized more than 51,000 pounds of marijuana this year compared to more than 573,000 pounds last fiscal year, more than 151,000 pounds of cocaine compared to more than 227,000 pounds in FY2021, and more than 7,300 pounds of meth compared to more than 11,500 pounds last fiscal year. AMO has also seized 373 pounds of heroin, compared to 480 pounds in FY2021.</p> <p>Just two milligrams of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid about 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine, is considered a lethal dose. "It is inexpensive, widely available, highly addictive — and potentially lethal," the Drug Enforcement Administration said. "Drug traffickers are increasingly mixing fentanyl with other illicit drugs — in powder and pill form — to drive addiction and create repeat customers. Many fentanyl poisoning victims are unaware that fentanyl is in the substance they are ingesting."</p>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that, out of 107,622 people determined to have died of drug overdoses and poisonings in the United States last year, 67 percent of those deaths involved synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.

Wednesday was International Overdose Awareness Day, and the White House recognized this week as Overdose Awareness Week. “We are targeting drug trafficking organizations by disrupting the operating capital they need to sustain their criminal enterprises,” President Biden said in the [proclamation](#).

Last week, Tucson Sector agents [seized](#) 340 packages of fentanyl pills with a value of \$4.3 million being transported by two U.S. citizens on Interstate 8 near Gila Bend, Ariz.

On Aug. 23 at the Juarez-Lincoln International Bridge, CBP officers [seized](#) 12 packages containing a total of 28.66 pounds of fentanyl being transported by a passenger vehicle from Mexico. “This is a significant seizure of fentanyl and our officers took appropriate care, utilizing personal protective equipment during the seizure to minimize potential exposure given the high potency and dangerousness of the narcotic,” said Laredo Port of Entry Director Albert Flores.

In San Diego, [seizures](#) of fentanyl are up by about 323 percent over the last three years, from 1,599 pounds in fiscal year 2019 to 6,767 pounds in FY2021.

CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus told the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security in May that FY2021 fentanyl seizures were “more than double the weight seized in FY 2020 and equivalent to an estimated 2.6 billion doses that would have otherwise permeated communities across the United States.”

“The majority of drugs entering the United States still enter through POEs along the Southwest Border,” Magnus said. “Ongoing investment in Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) systems has increased CBP’s ability to quickly detect suspected contraband, without hindering the flow of legitimate trade and travel. CBP utilizes more than 350 large-scale and 4,500 small-scale NII X-ray and gamma-ray imaging systems to detect the presence of illicit substances, including synthetic drugs, hidden within passenger belongings, cargo containers, commercial trucks, rail cars, privately owned vehicles, as well as Express Consignment Carriers and international mail parcels. In FY 2021, CBP performed approximately 17.5 million NII examinations, which resulted in the interdiction of nearly 220,000 pounds of narcotics. CBP continues to prioritize the expansion of NII capabilities to increase the probability of interdiction and improve the facilitation of legitimate trade and travel.”

The DEA [warned](#) this week of an increase in “rainbow fentanyl” designed to appeal to children. The agency noted that fentanyl available in the United States is primarily supplied by two criminal drug networks: the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG).

“Fentanyl is the single deadliest drug threat our nation has ever encountered,” DEA Administrator Anne Milgram said as the agency [marked](#) National Fentanyl Prevention and Awareness Day last Sunday. “From large cities to rural America, no community is safe from the presence of fentanyl.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Ohio cop kills unarmed Black man in bed
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkg3e7/columbus-ohio-cop-shooting-donovan-lewis
GIST	<p>A Columbus, Ohio, cop fatally shot an unarmed 20-year-old Black man within seconds of opening his bedroom door on Tuesday, as officers attempted to serve him a warrant for his arrest.</p> <p>Police body camera footage released to the public captured the killing.</p> <p>According to Columbus Police Department Chief Elaine Bryant, police were looking to serve Donovan Lewis, 20, a felony arrest warrant on charges of improperly handling a firearm, assault, and domestic violence.</p>

The bodycam footage shows at least three officers and a police dog arriving at Lewis' home around 2 a.m. on Tuesday.

Officers knock at the door of his apartment, cupping their ears against it and announcing their presence.

"We're not leaving, we know you're inside," one of the officers says. "Come to the door."

After about eight minutes, a man eventually answers the door, telling the officers that he was asleep. The cops enter the apartment and detain two people before announcing they're going to send in a K-9.

The dog walks around the kitchen and then barks at the door of a bedroom. An officer opens the door, immediately draws his weapon, and fires off a shot while Lewis is sitting up in his bed.

Officers ask Lewis to crawl out of the room as he writhes in bed, before entering the room and handcuffing him.

"Get your hands behind. Stop resisting," one of the officers says as they restrain him. "He's pulling away."

They begin searching him, during which an officer exclaims, "Let's get him out to the medic."

After being treated at the scene, Lewis was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead at 3:19 a.m., about an hour after the shooting.

Bryant identified the shooter as Ricky Anderson, the K-9 unit officer and a 30-year veteran of the force.

Rex Elliot, the attorney for Lewis' family, called Lewis' death "utterly senseless" during a press conference Thursday morning.

"If you think Officer Anderson had some justification for firing his weapon, then ask yourself why the police officer that had his weapon drawn with the clearest view of Donovan Lewis did not discharge his firearm," Elliot said. "There is no question that excessive deadly force was recklessly used by officer Anderson when he shot and killed an unarmed Black man."

Chief Bryant said Wednesday that police found a vape pen found on Lewis' bed. In a frame-by-frame breakdown of the footage, the chief showed Lewis had his right hand raised and his left hand back towards the pillow.

"Donovan Lewis lost his life. As a parent, I sympathize and grieve with his mother. As a community, I grieve with our community. But we're going to allow this investigation to take place," Bryant said during Wednesday's press conference, according to local news station NBC4.

The shooting is now the subject of an investigation by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

The fatal incident marked the third time in eight days that Columbus police fired their gun at a suspect, according to NBC4.

The department had already been facing scrutiny over the use of deadly force against Black people. In December 2020, former Columbus police officer Adam Coy shot and killed 47-year-old Andre Hill, an unarmed Black man, in his garage while responding to a 911 call he had nothing to do with. Coy is currently awaiting trial on murder charges.

In April 2021, Columbus officer Nicholas Reardon fatally shot 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant four times as she lunged toward someone with a knife. A grand jury declined to bring charges against Reardon earlier this year.

	The incident is also another example of police killing an unarmed Black person while trying to serve them an arrest warrant. Earlier this year, 22-year-old Amir Locke was shot and killed by police as he slept in his Minneapolis home during a no-knock raid. In March 2020, Breonna Taylor was killed by Louisville police as she slept in bed next to her partner. Last month, the Department of Justice brought new charges against four officers involved in her killing.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Meth, money, militias: Basra as narco-town
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/epzbgz/crystal-meth-basra-iraq
GIST	<p>BASRA, Iraq – In a tennis court-size hall, dozens of young men sway to the rhythms of a Shia eulogy singer. Red and blue lighting bathes their shirtless torsos and murals of Imam Hussain in purple, and ceiling fans don't do enough to combat the 45-degree Celsius (113 F) heat of the night.</p> <p>This communal Shia mourning ritual was banned under Saddam Hussein. But these rave-like self-flagellation sessions, during which Shia Muslims hit their backs, chests, and heads in a trance-like state for several hours, are now a nightly occurrence in Basra. The practice memorialises the Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Hussain, whose death galvanised the emergence of Shia Islam.</p> <p>Those attending this <i>Hussainiya</i> are sober, but not all of Basra is this pious. For Ibrahim, the ritual is a way to escape the crushing reality of life in this sweltering, dangerous city – and to stay away from crystal meth, the other thing that used to help.</p> <p>Ibrahim was working on a construction site when his ordeal with meth began, a five-year journey during which he experienced for himself how the drug trade had swept through his hometown. VICE World News is not giving Ibrahim's full name for fear of reprisals.</p> <p>"There was a guy who took a puff from a pipe and worked all day without complaining about the heat," he told VICE World News, sitting cross-legged on his living room floor in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the port city.</p> <p>Temperatures here in summer are unbearable, often going higher than 50 C (120 F), making Basra one of the hottest cities on the planet. Days on building sites under the remorseless sun are exhausting. "So, with two of my friends, I bought a bag, and we tried it ourselves," he said.</p> <p>Ten years ago, crystal meth wasn't a big deal in Iraq. It used to be transported through Basra, as part of an illegal trade route from Iran, where it is manufactured for sale in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Persian Gulf.</p> <p>But over the last few years, the highly addictive stimulant has found a new home in the overheated, troubled city, which is rife with Iranian-backed armed militias, weak government, endemic corruption, and an unemployment rate that's at 21 percent and rising. Meth and other drugs are a new challenge for the Iraqi authorities, who have little experience dealing with narcotics. A new conflict is opening up between the Iraqi state and drug traffickers who have links to a large network of Iran-backed militias, who in turn are backed by powerful tribes busy fighting over territory and smuggling routes on the border areas with Iran.</p> <p>"We need a whole ministry to deal with drugs. A department in the police force is not enough," said Abdul Amir Shannta, whose nephew, a police major, was killed in a shootout with a notorious alleged local meth kingpin.</p> <p>"There is huge money in it, and everyone has a hand in it."</p> <p>Basra province, which takes its name from its capital city, is home to over 70 per cent of Iraq's oil wealth and is the country's only gateway to international waters. Basra city, founded in the seventh century, was a literary centre during the Islamic Golden Age – in <i>The Arabian Nights</i>, Basra is the town that Sinbad leaves to go on his epic journey.</p>

But its recent past is marred by the Iran-Iraq war and rebellions against former dictator Saddam Hussein. It became a stronghold for Shia militants after the US-led 2003 invasion, as armed groups and tribal factions struggled for control of land and smuggling routes, and it was the scene of one of the war's bloodiest clashes as the militias fought invading British forces.

Iran-backed armed militias still maintain a heavy presence and influence in the city of nearly 2 million, and for the last 10 years they have turned the Shalamcheh border crossing with Iran into a narco trafficking hub. People lower their voices anytime the groups' names are mentioned, euphemistically referring to them as "political parties" or the "resistance."

The locals take pride in their town's past greatness and rail against the chronic corruption and religious zealotry that now choke daily life.

This stifling atmosphere has pushed some people into a cycle of drug addiction. Crystal meth is mostly used by young people trapped in poverty, and the surge in its use is pushing an already troubled city to its limits.

This is causing trouble for people from all walks of life, even for Abbas, the owner of an electronics store. Users make pipes by unscrewing the head of a lightbulb and taping a straw to it. "Just the other day, a guy came in begging for a pack of lightbulbs and got upset when I told him no," Abbas told VICE World News, giving only his first name.

"Sometimes, the crystal meth users break the backlights of cars or motorbikes to take out the bulb so they can make a pipe out of it," he said.

Basrawis used to only associate drugs with Uday, Saddam's eldest son, who led a notoriously wild and dark party lifestyle for over 30 years while his father ruled. The city avoided most of the ISIS violence that has plagued other parts of Iraq since 2014, and the relative peace means this scorching-hot city is now Iraq's main economic centre. But it's still not easy for people to get good work. Now Iraq's interior ministry says hundreds of kilos of meth, and millions of opioid pills, are seized by Basra's police each month.

For the Baghdad-based government and Iraq's armed forces, fatigued by sectarian civil war and the fight against jihadist groups including but not limited to ISIS, imposing order on lawless Basra is a challenge.

The city is ruled by coalitions of conservative Shia parties with links to armed groups, which in recent years have cracked down on bars, clubs and other un-Islamic activities, setting up night-time checkpoints to keep residents on their toes.

The explosion in both locally-cooked meth and product smuggled from Iran through Basra's vast ports means the Iraqi authorities have ventured into policing narcotics, an area previously unknown to lawmakers and security forces.

Despite repeated claims by Iraqi officials that they have arrested over 20,000 people for using and dealing drugs in the past two years and seized hundreds of kilos of meth and millions of pills, there is no reliable estimate of the actual quantity of drugs flowing through the market. And locals doubt if the relatively newly formed branch of the Iraqi force has been effective in tackling drug gangs.

"The border is our major issue, but the government can do very little. At the end of the day, the armed groups have the last say. No one is ready to risk their lives to fight against armed militias," said an Iraqi border customs officer familiar with the smuggling routes on the border with Iran and Iraq, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he wasn't permitted to speak to the media.

According to the Iraqi Interior Ministry, 5,300 people were arrested for drug-related crimes and hundreds of kilos of drugs were seized in the first quarter of this year alone.

Meth is mainly dealt in the north-western edge of the city, in places like 5-Miles, a ghettoised neighbourhood named for its five-mile-long road that runs parallel to the train tracks and old canals.

People once swam in the waterways here to escape Basra's oppressive heat, but now they are filled with layers of trash, the water's oily surface reflecting the hot sun. 5-Miles is Basra's most troubled neighbourhood: It gets only a few hours of electricity a day, and the average monthly income is just \$200 (£170).

Dealers selling crystal meth and opioids use motorbikes to navigate 5-Miles' narrow alleys and quickly disappear into crowds. A gram of crystal meth costs between 5,000-15,000 Iraqi dinar (\$3-10, £4-8, €5-10), cheaper than buying a round of beers, and it can be delivered to any address.

Here, even alcohol is now more expensive and harder to come by than meth. The local government cancelled retailers' alcohol licences over the years and practically banned liquor stores after 2017, claiming it was because shop owners were selling booze to minors.

Now, Basrawis looking for a drink must head to the city's Ottoman-era Old City, where bootleggers sell beer and spirits in black plastic bags from selected houses. Customers place their orders with young men who sit in the stairways in front of open doors and then run upstairs to get the goods.

At night, the narrow, dark alleyways off the Old City's main drag, Bashar Street, turn into a hub for everything the Shia local authorities don't like. Rubbish bags filled with empty booze bottles stack up just a few metres away from religious banners reading "How can I drink while my brother, Hussain, is thirsty?", a reference to the foremost Shia Imam.

Despite the alcohol prohibition, bored young people with nothing to do looking for a break from the long hot days call their alcohol dealers or head out to deliver black plastic bags filled with booze. Just 100 metres from a police station, you can get chilled beers and locally made spirits for three times the average market price.

Groups of people hang around near the water on weekends to avoid the heavy traffic and the constant sound of construction as the city prepares to host the 25th version of the Arabian Gulf Cup, a football tournament, in January next year. A \$550 million stadium was finished in 2013, a major project that the local government takes pride in despite criticism of the huge expense.

The "ship graveyard" on the southern-east edge of the town, where the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers pour into the Persian Gulf, is a popular place for drinkers to go. People sit next to piles of abandoned vessels, from huge transport ships to little wooden fishing boats, pulling beers out of plastic bags.

Notorious locally made whiskey called "Daesh," a sour, metallic-tasting beverage, is a favourite of those who want something quick. It earned its name because it's made in the former ISIS town of Kirkuk and also because of the heavy hangovers it delivers.

"There is something wrong going on inside that can. It is not whiskey," a Karrar resident said while drinking a cold beer. He declined to give his name.

People hang out here until midnight before being sent home by police, who track down motorbike riders and limit their movement around the poor neighbourhoods.

Cops target drivers on the pretext that motorbikes and motor rickshaws ruin the city's image and cause bad traffic for visitors, but really it's to crack down on drug and alcohol dealers.

The security forces also inquire about the marital status of young couples.

“Life is tough for the kids growing up around here. Things change fast, and it is more likely to be for the worse,” said Ibrahim, the recovered meth user who started taking the drug while working in construction and later began selling with two friends.

“The feeling of being invincible and the immense energy was really good, but soon the trouble followed,” he said.

“We started to make a decent amount of money. We could rent a house, and we bought a gun. It might have been the effect of the drug. Otherwise, none of us was into playing little mafia games.

“The sales keep coming in, and our supplier kept us going even if we screwed up for a week,” added Ibrahim.

The only rehab clinic in Basra opened two years ago in response to the rising number of users. It’s a 2,000-square-metre area behind Fayha hospital’s main building, surrounded by tall walls topped with barbed wire. Around 2,600 patients, all with addiction problems, have been treated here since the government-funded clinic opened, in 2018.

Police stand behind the large metal door, which makes it look more like a jail than a rehab centre, even though those being treated here come willingly or are referred by their families and treated free of charge. The treatment methods for the 30 current patients are like something out of a Victorian-era asylum.

“We shave their heads first,” said Kadhim Khayrallah, the director of the clinic. “It makes them shy to go outside for a while, which is something I advise the family of the patients to continue with, because drugs come from bad companions,” he told VICE World News during an interview in the clinic’s main office.

“The system here is strict, but that is the only effective way to build willpower to overcome the drug. They wake up early in the morning, they do sport, therapy, breakfast, and then meet their families, and then again do sports before we lock them up again for the night,” said Khayrallah.

“I like it here so much that I don’t want to go home,” said a young patient, who was admitted 20 days earlier, and was lying on a bed in the clinic’s main ward.

“At least we get 24/7 electricity and air conditioning. That wouldn’t be possible in my own home,” he added, before five other patients burst out laughing.

Drug users who are caught by the police don’t end up at the Fayha clinic. Instead, they are processed at a gritty detention centre in Qibla neighbourhood.

Many people spend up to six months of pre-trial detention here before a court makes a decision on their case. The three halls of overcrowded cells have gained notoriety for the terrible conditions, with inmates sleeping in three-hour shifts because there isn’t enough space for everyone to lie down.

Every Saturday, hundreds of men and women line up under the shade outside the centre to get a pass to visit their sons and brothers for five minutes. Families bring favourite foods, fruit, and clothes for their loved ones inside.

“I made my son his favourite soup and fresh-baked flatbread with roasted sesame seeds. He got sentenced to ten years for dealing,” Um Abbas, a frustrated mother, tells VICE World News. She is sitting on the pavement, clad in a black abaya, her sunburnt cheeks bulging from her tightly tied headscarf.

“I don’t want him to be transferred to the big prison. They said he was a dealer, but the lawyer was a son of a bitch. I gave him ten million Iraqi dinars (\$7,000), and he didn’t even appear in court. We even tried the tribal settlement, but it did not work out,” she said.

In the absence of proper policing and rehabilitation, Basra's tribal leaders have filled the void. They deal with the lion's share of sorting out social and criminal issues in the city, stepping into the power vacuum left by Iraq's national and local governments, which have been weakened by corruption and political deadlock.

"There is a sad reality in today's Iraq, that the state is a bit like a ghost, and we have had to step in using the traditional ways to avoid chaos in society," said Sheikh Ali al-Aliyawi of the Al Bu Ali tribe, one of the major tribes in the city. He spoke to VICE World News from an opulent room in his house decked out with golden furniture.

"As leaders of the community, when it comes to drugs, we have all agreed to go in one direction, which is that we will not support or back anyone who is troubled by such poison," he said, waving his turtle-shaped, silver prayer beads and smoothing his long white robe.

"The tribal set-up and gatherings follow the same way of courts and investigate every detail. When it comes to drugs, we have made it clear that anyone troubled with this poison will be renounced and will not get any support from their tribes."

According to Mustafa Hassan and Munis Abdulrazzaq, two young lawyers running a practice a few blocks away from the Qibla detention centre, the use of force and torture is a go-to for local police officers when dealing with drug suspects.

"Ten out of ten drug users face the threat of torture and forced confession when they are arrested, which is, unfortunately, the easy way police officers get more information on the distribution networks and capture bigger targets," said Hassan.

"Medical care and rehabilitation centres are the solutions to the meth issue. However, the Iraqi system's lack of experience with this kind of crisis means we are getting overcrowded prisons, and innocent and vulnerable people sentenced to long prison sentences based on forced confessions," he said.

Abdulrazzaq added: "The other issue is that in our society, people do not know that lawyers can help them. The officers tell the suspects lawyers are useless and co-operating with the police is the only way out."

Ibrahim, the construction site worker who managed to get clean 18 months ago, went straight after sobering run-ins with Basra's police.

"Once, I got caught with over ten grams of crystal, some pills and a pistol," he said. "It was the longest 15 minutes in my life while I waited for them to do something to me, but in the end, I offered my pistol to the police guy, and he let me go," he said.

"I just stopped one day. I knew the only way out was to lock myself up, and I didn't leave the house for eight months. By the time I went out for the first time, the pandemic lockdowns had started, and I didn't know why people were wearing a mask," said Ibrahim.

A dedicated Shia Muslim, Ibrahim is at a Hussainiya, the same one he attends every night at a local spot with dozens of his friends.

"One of my friends got caught for possession a few months after I went into isolation. He spent a year in jail and was roughed up by the experience when I saw him last. The other guy went on to do bigger business and got 10 years in prison," said Ibrahim.

"I found my way out, and I got back on the path of Imam Hussein," he said. Around him, young men swayed and sweated, chanting the imam's name, before heading back out into the hot, dark night.

As long as militias continue to move product through the no man's land between Iran and Iraq with impunity, and Iraqi efforts at policing and rehabilitation remain inadequate to deal with the scale of the problem, Basra's meth issue is likely to grow.

For the city's young people, there are not many options – pick up a Qu'ran, a gun, or a pipe.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Seattle community court referrals surge
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/09/seattle-community-court-referrals-are-surging-heres-why
GIST	<p>Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison was elected last November with a tough-on-crime promise to aggressively prosecute criminal cases. So why have referrals to Seattle Community Court — which connects people to social services rather than put them in jail — more than doubled since Davison took office in January?</p> <p>It turns out that the rise in community court cases is not an unexpected softer side of the city attorney, but in fact a result of Davison doing what she promised: prosecuting more cases than her predecessor.</p> <p>Seattle Community Court is open to people arrested for low-level misdemeanors such as shoplifting, trespassing, disorderly bus conduct, car prowling and more. If a case is eligible for community court, it is automatically sent there, although defendants can opt into traditional court if they want. The exception is for repeat offenders, which the city attorney can now choose to prosecute.</p> <p>Because the city attorney deals only with misdemeanors – higher level crimes are the county prosecutor's purview – an increase in overall case filings can easily lead to more community court cases.</p> <p>The city attorney office's criminal division recently released its second quarter data report. It shows there were 450 referrals to community court in Q2 of this year. Q1 had 300 community court referrals.</p> <p>Seattle Community Court was created in August 2020 and the previous high mark for referrals was just over 200 in Q2 2021.</p> <p>The doubling of community court referrals coincides with a sharp increase in all case filings from the city attorney compared to the past few years. The office filed 1,708 cases in Q2 of this year, 26% more than Q1 of 2022 and 124% more than Q2 2021.</p> <p>The number of cases the city attorney has declined has decreased as well. The office can choose to not prosecute a case referred to them by the police for a number of reasons including not being confident about proving the crime beyond reasonable doubt, lack of cooperation from the victim, technical issues and more.</p> <p>The new report shows a decline rate of 51% in Q2 2022, down 10% from Q2 2021, under the previous city attorney Pete Holmes. But that includes the nearly 2,000 cases Davison dismissed as part of her effort to clear a 5,000-case backlog. If you separate out the backlog declines, the Q2 decline rate was 43%.</p> <p>Natalie Walton-Anderson, the city's criminal division chief, said the increase in cases is due in large part to the office's much faster response time to new cases. The median time for a filing decision is now three days, down from 124 days under the previous city attorney. Faster filings mean more cases are moving through the system.</p> <p>So far, Seattle community court is handling the increased load, said Judge Damon Shadid, the Seattle Municipal Court judge who leads the community court program, but the extra cases are having an impact.</p>

“It’s been a challenge,” said Shadid. “You have to understand that our calendar space did not increase when the city attorney’s office started filing more cases. The court has not received increased funding to make up for increased filings.”

Shadid helped create Seattle’s community court in partnership with the King County Department of Public Defense and the Seattle City Attorney’s office. The aim of the court is to try to break the cycle of poverty and crime by connecting people with housing, substance use counseling, health care, employment opportunities and more, rather than putting them in jail.

In addition to working with case managers, community court participants can be required to perform community service and pay restitution. “It is holding people accountable; we’re just taking a different tact in how to help people exit the criminal legal system,” said Shadid.

Seattle’s community court is one of several to [open in recent years in King County](#).

“If we had a more adequate social safety net, then most of these crimes wouldn’t be committed in the first place,” said Shadid.

Although filings are up, the judge said the faster filing time is helpful because it connects people to services sooner after their alleged crime and increases the likelihood they actually show up for court. “That is definitely the biggest challenge with court in general and community court specifically: It’s hard to get people into court for that first hearing,” Shadid explained.

Though court reformers see community court as a more humane alternative to booking people into jail, they don’t necessarily see the increase in community court referrals as positive. Instead, many want to see more cases diverted into alternatives that provide social services and support before they enter the court system. According to city attorney office data, pre-filing diversions and pre-trial diversions are both down significantly compared to years before the pandemic and prior to the creation of Seattle Community Court.

Lisa Daugaard is co-executive director of the [Public Defender Association](#), a nonprofit focused on reforming the criminal legal system (not to be confused with King County’s Department of Public Defense, which provides legal representation to defendants). The Public Defender Association helped create one such pre-filing alternative called [LEAD or Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion](#). LEAD similarly connects people to case managers who assist with drug treatment, health care, housing and more. But LEAD allows police officers to connect someone they arrest or come in contact with on the street to case management without referring the case to the city attorney’s office first.

“All other things being equal, community-based care is more successful than court-based care for most people,” said Daugaard. “It’s less traumatizing and a lot of behaviors involved in cases in community court are related to the aftermath of traumatic life experience. ... We don’t want to push people further into a stigmatizing and expensive system than necessary to make that help available.”

LEAD is one of several pre-filing and pre-trial diversion programs in King County including pre-filing diversion for youth offenders through the nonprofit [Choose 180](#) and a domestic violence pre-filing diversion program [through Gay City](#) for those 18 to 24 years old.

“While community court is a much less harmful version of the criminal legal system ... ultimately the criminal legal system is not going to resolve the challenges people are facing. They’re there because they lack housing, they lack food, their basic needs are not being met,” said Anita Khandelwal, director of the county’s Department of Public Defense.

Both Khandelwal and Daugaard expressed concern about the overall increase in filings from the Seattle city attorney coming at a time when the downtown Seattle jail is under scrutiny for being overcrowded, understaffed and suffering from a rate of suicides exceeding the national average. The [Seattle Times recently reported](#) that because of understaffing, in-person visitation is largely suspended, programming

is reduced and people must stay in their cells for [23 hours a day](#). Department of Public Defense attorneys say it is difficult to get in to meet with their clients.

“Being in a jail facility is never good,” said Daugaard. “But [current conditions in the jail] are at a different order of magnitude so people should be bending over backwards to keep people out of there and it seems to be trending in a different way.”

Despite their disagreements on approach, Khandelwal said she thinks she and the city attorney have a shared goal.

“We all want a safer city. An expensive, racially disproportionate system that ultimately doesn’t address people’s needs is not going to get us there,” said Khandelwal. “There are those who look to the criminal legal system as a means of solving our problems, solving homelessness. But we know that’s not going to happen. The path there is housing and services.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Pileup of sex abuse scandals; why?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/world/americas/whats-behind-the-pileup-of-sex-abuse-scandals.html
GIST	<p>Over just the past few months, multiple stories have broken about powerful or prestigious organizations that tolerated or concealed serious abuse for years.</p> <p>This week, for instance, Herlufsholm, an elite Danish boarding school that was attended by Prince Christian of Denmark until his parents pulled him out a few days ago, has been engulfed in a bullying and abuse scandal. In August, an Associated Press investigation found that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ abuse hotline diverted complaints of child abuse away from law enforcement, leaving some children in dangerous or abusive situations for years. Last May, an independent investigation found that the Southern Baptist Convention had covered up and enabled sexual assaults and other abuse of parishioners.</p> <p>Go back slightly further in time, and the stack of scandals grows higher: Larry Nassar and U.S.A. Gymnastics. Jerry Sandusky and Penn State. Multiple different abusers within the Catholic Church. Various private schools. The movie industry. The Boy Scouts. University campuses.</p> <p>Whenever a story like that breaks, the focus tends to be on the specifics: the psychological profile of the abuser, and the culture or ideology of the organization where the abuse occurred. But another way of interpreting those cases consistently gets overlooked: that abuse scandals are just one example of a much broader human resistance to self-police wrongdoing within our own groups and communities.</p> <p>That tendency can leave abuse victims and other marginalized people in terrible danger — and can also end up harming the very institutions that are trying to protect themselves.</p> <p>The ‘Beautiful Souls’ problem</p> <p>In the fall of 2013, as Penn State University struggled with the aftermath of the Jerry Sandusky child sexual abuse scandal, the school announced that it would give every incoming freshman a copy of “Beautiful Souls” by Eyal Press, a book about people who stood up against wrongdoing in their workplaces and communities. A banker who reported financial improprieties at the firm she worked for. Soldiers who refused to participate in human rights violations. A police officer who quietly disobeyed rules that kept Jews out of Switzerland during the Holocaust.</p> <p>“I think it was obvious why they chose the book,” Press told me in an interview this week. “They felt like, you know, ‘God, if only an upstander had come forward and spared the university from this horrific embarrassment and scandal. We would like to inculcate this principled behavior in our students, because we’ve seen what happens at an institution when everybody stays silent and conforms.’”</p> <p>If that was the plan, however, I have to wonder if those who selected “Beautiful Souls” had actually read it. Because it’s not a book about the importance of that kind of heroism. It’s a book about how much</p>

human society consistently hates and rejects it. (The term “beautiful soul” is actually an insult in Israel, where Press first came across it. Its connotations fall somewhere between “bleeding heart” and “treacherous hypocrite.”)

The human impulse to conform is so powerful that it can shape people’s view of reality, morality, and everything in between. Group norms and opinions about what behavior is right or wrong often have [more influence](#) on people’s moral attitudes than actual laws do. And in the famous [conformity study](#) by the researcher Solomon Asch, a majority of participants chose to select a clearly incorrect answer to a question rather than defy the group by selecting the right one.

And so when someone defies conformity by calling out wrongdoing within a group, including sexual abuse, other members of that community tend to react with disbelief, anger and ostracism.

“The real lesson of the book is that we love to honor these individuals from a distance, and after the fact,” Press told me. “But listening to them — not even honoring them, just listening to them! — in real time, when they are calling out our own behavior or our own institutions, is exceedingly rare.”

The people Press wrote about tended to be ostracized and punished for taking a stand against wrongdoing in their own communities. Some lost their careers, others their reputations. And the wrongdoing they opposed mostly continued anyway.

Looking for forests, not trees

Viewing abuse scandals against that broad backdrop of human behavior makes them look a little bit different than they do on their own. Because when an abuse victim speaks out against a valued member of their own community — a teacher, professor, pastor, respected athlete, or even a respected peer — that is, in effect, a refusal to conform to the group’s norms of who is to be trusted and valued, and a violation of its hierarchy.

Sometimes the hierarchy is a formal one, as in the case of some religious institutions or the military. But sometimes it’s the result of subtler structures of sexism, race, or class. But whether the norm is overt or implied, challenging it can seem transgressive. And that makes it easy for people in power to dismiss abuse claims as motivated by personal vendettas, greed or delusion.

Abuse scandals tend to follow a pattern, said Nicole Bedera, a sociologist who studies the ways that groups and institutions enable sexual violence.

“We get caught up in the details of individual cases as if each one of them is different, and each organizational response is different, but that’s not true,” she said. “The finer details might change a little bit from case to case, but the organizational response to sexual violence in general tends to be pretty consistent, especially in organizations that are allowed to self-police or to self-govern.”

People who brought abuse claims, she found, were often presumed to be untrustworthy or mistaken. When victims reported abuse, institutions like universities, schools or churches tended to react with doubt and skepticism. That doubt was used to justify inaction, enabling the abuse to continue. “What I’ve found is people won’t say ‘I don’t believe the victim.’ They’ll just say ‘I’m not sure enough,’” Bedera told me.

The pattern was not just one of skepticism against those who raised abuse complaints, however. She also found that institutions tend to act to protect individuals who are perceived as high-value members of their communities — in sexual assault cases, usually high-value men.

Sometimes that value was concrete. At one university she studied in depth, the category included scholars who are seen as having important academic legacies to protect, or successful student athletes. But she also found that men, particularly if they were white, were often seen as automatically carrying their potential future accomplishments with them, and so were treated as high-value individuals even if they were still just teens. The women who raised accusations of assault or abuse, by contrast, were not presumed to have valuable futures worth protecting.

	<p>The result was that, over time, abuse victims tended to be disbelieved or dismissed. Perpetrators were given the benefit of the doubt, and took advantage of that freedom to continue their abuses. And that eventually led to harm not just for the victims, but for the institutions that had enabled the harm to continue.</p> <p>“Institutions end up damaging themselves even more because of this, because it just means that the abuses go on for a longer time,” Press said. “If you think about the Catholic Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, or Penn State for that matter, eventually the dirty laundry gets aired.”</p> <p>“And the longer the institution waits, the worse it is for everyone.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Ex-NYPD cop jailed 10yrs for Capitol riot
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/us/jan-6-nypd-officer-sentenced.html
GIST	<p>A retired New York City police officer who swung a metal flagpole at a Washington officer during the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol was sentenced on Thursday to 10 years in prison, the longest sentence yet in a case stemming from the riot.</p> <p>The retired officer, Thomas Webster, was the first person charged in connection with the riot to defend himself before a jury with a self-defense argument. He was convicted in May of all of the felony charges he faced, including assault.</p> <p>On Thursday, Judge Amit P. Mehta of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia told Mr. Webster, “I think you were caught up in a moment, and as you well know, even being caught up in a moment has consequences.”</p> <p>Another man charged in the Jan. 6 riot pleaded guilty on Thursday to assaulting law enforcement officers with pepper spray. The man, Julian Elie Khater of Somerset, N.J., who was charged last year with taking part in an assault on Officer Brian D. Sicknick of the Capitol Police, pleaded guilty to two felony charges in a plea deal with federal prosecutors.</p> <p>Mr. Khater, 33, was accused of working with a friend, George Tanios, to douse Officer Sicknick with chemical spray as the mob plowed through the police, who were behind bike rack barriers on the west side of the Capitol. While initial reports suggested that Officer Sicknick died of his injuries after the attack, an autopsy later determined that he died of natural causes, after having multiple strokes.</p> <p>Mr. Khater faces up to eight years in prison if convicted. Joe Tacopina, a lawyer for Mr. Khater, said it was “improper to comment at this time” because of the future sentencing date.</p> <p>Mr. Webster’s lawyer, James E. Monroe, did not respond to a call seeking comment on Thursday.</p> <p>The sentencing and the guilty plea from the two men came nearly 20 months after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack, which set off a sprawling criminal inquiry from the Justice Department. Prosecutors have embarked on the marathon process of trying more than 800 people arrested in connection with the riot.</p> <p>Mr. Webster’s sentence was longer than that of any of the defendants who have come to trial or struck plea bargains so far. Until Thursday, two convicted rioters had the longest sentence at seven years and three months: Thomas Robertson, another former police officer and Army veteran who prosecutors said had confronted police officers at the Capitol; and Guy Wesley Reffitt, the first defendant to go on trial in the attack on the Capitol.</p> <p>Mr. Webster’s guilty verdict earlier this year was returned by a jury within two hours on the first full day of deliberations. A former Marine who once served on the protective detail of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York, Mr. Webster turned himself in to law enforcement last year. His trajectory as a</p>

retired officer changed drastically on Jan. 6, when he started a brawl that stood out even amid the hours of violent footage from that day.

The videos show Mr. Webster emerging from the crowd, screaming expletives and berating officers at the barricade. He is seen repeatedly pushing at the barricades and then swinging a flagpole at Officer Noah Rathbun before shoving through the police line and tackling the officer. On Twitter, users nicknamed Mr. Webster #EyeGouger.

Mr. Webster had told a different story to the jury, saying that Officer Rathbun had provoked him with a brief wave before throwing a punch at him that struck him like a “freight train.”

Prosecutors, however, said the footage had cast doubt on that account.

Evidence in the case suggests Mr. Webster had been swept up in weeks of online claims that the election had been stolen — a lie fueled by [former President Donald J. Trump](#) that unleashed a movement that shattered democratic norms and disrupted the peaceful transfer of power.

Mr. Webster’s weeklong trial touched on a striking paradox of Jan. 6: While many people in the crowd were vocal supporters of the police, scores were ultimately charged with assaulting officers. His lengthy sentence could also give pause to [other defendants who planned to use similar arguments at their own trials](#).

On the witness stand earlier this year, Mr. Webster said that when he attacked a fellow member of law enforcement, “it was almost like a role reversal.”

“I felt like I was the cop and he was the protester,” he added.

On Thursday, Judge Mehta told Mr. Webster that while he had served his country as a Marine and a police officer, he “blew it all up in 46 seconds.”

Mr. Khater, the rioter who pleaded guilty on Thursday, had attended Mr. Trump’s rally near the Ellipse and then joined the pro-Trump mob at the Capitol, prosecutors said. His friend, Mr. Tanios, had purchased two canisters of bear spray and two canisters of pepper spray before traveling to Washington, according to the Justice Department.

Mr. Khater, who had at least one canister of pepper spray with him, came within a few steps of the bike rack barriers, prosecutors said. As the mob pulled the barriers away, Mr. Khater got within eight feet of Capitol officers and sprayed Officer Sicknick in the face, prosecutors said.

Mr. Khater then “continued to deploy the spray” as he advanced on other Capitol Police officers, spraying two more directly in the face, the Justice Department said in a [statement](#).

“All three officers suffered bodily injury from the pepper spray attack and were incapacitated and unable to perform their duties,” the department said.

Mr. Khater and Mr. Tanios were arrested in March 2021. Mr. Tanios [pleaded guilty in July](#) to misdemeanors under his own deal with prosecutors, and will be sentenced on Dec. 6. Mr. Khater is scheduled to be sentenced on Dec. 13.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	09/01 Argentina VP assassination attempt
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/01/world/americas/cristina-kirchner-attack.html
GIST	An assassination attempt on Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina failed on Thursday night as a man pointed a pistol at her head and tried to pull the trigger, but the gun did not go off, according to video footage and a statement from Argentina’s president.

Mrs. Kirchner was unharmed.

“Cristina is still alive because, for reasons that have not been confirmed technically, the weapon, which was loaded with five bullets, did not fire,” President Alberto Fernández said late Thursday in an address to the nation. “This is the most serious event since we recovered our democracy.”

The federal police arrested Fernando Andres Sabag Montiel, 35, a Brazilian man living in Argentina, in connection with the attack, according to the Buenos Aires police.

Mrs. Kirchner, a leftist former president who is the most prominent leader in Argentina, with three decades in the public eye, is a deeply polarizing figure and is on trial on corruption charges. Her supporters have rallied outside her home in Buenos Aires since last week, sometimes clashing with the police.

Just after 9 p.m. on Thursday, as Mrs. Kirchner was getting out of her vehicle outside her home, where a large crowd had gathered, a man quickly approached and pointed a gun inches from her face, according to video footage and the authorities. A clicking sound heard in videos suggested that the man then tried to pull the trigger.

Mrs. Kirchner crouched down, and the man was pulled away.

Five people chased a man away from the scene and said he had tried to kill Mrs. Kirchner, according to the Buenos Aires police. The federal police then arrested Mr. Montiel and found a pistol near the scene, the Buenos Aires police said.

Mr. Fernández declared Friday a national holiday so Argentines could “defend life and democracy in solidarity with our vice president.”

“The outcry, horror and repudiation that this event generates in us should become a permanent commitment to eradicate hate and violence from our democratic lives,” he said.

Members of Argentina’s Congress said they had formed a commission to investigate the episode.

Mrs. Kirchner, 69, was Argentina’s president from 2007 to 2015 and the first lady from 2003 to 2007, when her husband, Néstor Kirchner, was president. Their political power was so strong in Argentina that it gave rise to Kirchnerism, a left-wing movement that remains one of the most powerful political forces in the country.

In 2019, she returned to the Casa Rosada, Argentina’s presidential offices, after masterminding a political ticket in which she would run for vice president and Mr. Fernández would seek the presidency. Mr. Fernández is not expected to run for re-election next year because of dismal approval ratings amid the spiraling inflation of Argentina’s economy.

Mrs. Kirchner, despite being reviled by the right in Argentina, is still adored by a large portion of the country. Many political analysts have been speculating that Mrs. Kirchner could try to return to the presidency next year.

But she is also dealing with a corruption trial that is in its final stages and could conclude in December. She faces accusations that she helped direct state funds for public roadwork projects to a company owned by a family friend. Prosecutors last month said they were seeking a 12-year prison sentence for Mrs. Kirchner and a ban on holding public office. However, even if convicted, she would most likely avoid those punishments for years as appeals played out.

That corruption case has caused a new swirl of controversy around Mrs. Kirchner. Many on the right in Argentina have called for her to be jailed, and last week, one opposition lawmaker said that her corruption cases justified bringing back the death penalty.

	<p>Her supporters have rallied in her defense, saying she is a victim of political persecution. For nearly two weeks, supporters have gathered outside her home in an affluent neighborhood near downtown Buenos Aires. On Saturday, thousands took to the streets there, leading to confrontations with police. Mrs. Kirchner eventually urged her supporters to go home that night.</p> <p>She has faced several other judicial battles, and has emerged victorious in some of them.</p> <p>Last year, a court dismissed charges against her over accusations that she conspired to cover up Iran's purported role in the bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires in 1994, which killed 85 people. The accusations against Mrs. Kirchner were first made in 2015 by a prosecutor, Alberto Nisman, who was found dead of a gunshot wound in his apartment days later. His death was never solved, and the matter has been a source of frenzied speculation and political infighting ever since.</p> <p>The Buenos Aires police said they had come into contact with Mr. Montiel at least once before, in March 2021, when he was sitting in a parked car without a license plate. The police said that when he went to retrieve documents from the glove box, a knife fell out, which the police seized.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Kitsap Co. traffic stop nets guns, drugs
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/kitsap-county-traffic-stop-nets-several-guns-drugs-21000-cash/GYLWHWRPPBA3FH5S63GJ5TGV3E/
GIST	<p>A sheriff's deputy seized thousands of pills and several pounds of other drugs, three guns and more than \$20,000 in cash while making a traffic stop Monday, the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office announced.</p> <p>Around 1 a.m. on Monday, a deputy conducted the traffic stop after observing a driver make several violations on State Route 3 near Denton Road.</p> <p>When the deputy stopped the driver, a 27-year-old woman, he saw a semi-automatic handgun between the driver's seat and the console.</p> <p>The deputy found that the driver did not have a permit to carry a concealed weapon. The deputy then got the driver's permission to search the car for more weapons, which turned up two more guns. One of the weapons was reported stolen from Pierce County.</p> <p>The deputy also found a clear storage container with hundreds of blue pills that appeared to be fentanyl. The deputy determined that the large quantity of pills meant that they were intended for distribution and not personal use.</p> <p>The deputy then ordered the vehicle impounded pending an application for a search warrant. When the warrant was granted, a search recovered 9,850 blue fentanyl pills, 2 1/2 pounds of methamphetamines, three-quarters of a pound of black tar heroin, two ounces of cocaine, and \$21,000 in cash.</p> <p>The driver was arrested and booked into the Kitsap County Jail for possession of a stolen firearm and possession of narcotics with intent to deliver.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	09/01 Mass shootings obscure daily gun toll
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Devastating-Mass-shootings-obscure-daily-U-S-17414442.php
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Cameron Taylor was watching an illegal street race that had attracted hundreds to an intersection in Portland, Oregon, but decided to leave as the crowd got increasingly unruly. Moments later, gunfire erupted and Taylor was hit by a stray bullet as he and a friend headed to their car.</p>

Police, who were overwhelmed with 911 calls about other shootings, couldn't control multiple street takeovers in the city that night and had trouble finding the victims of three shootings that occurred during the chaos.

"His friend who was with him put him in the car and drove him out to get him to the hospital, but he was not able to make it and that friend called his parents" to say Taylor was dead, family friend Erin Russell told The Associated Press.

Taylor, 20, died Sunday the same day that four high-profile, public shooting rampages in Bend, Oregon, Phoenix, Detroit and Houston drew national headlines. His slaying went largely unnoticed amid the daily toll of gun violence that has come to define Portland and a number of other American cities since the pandemic.

Homicide rates appear to be dropping in some major U.S. cities, such as New York and Chicago, but in others killings are on the rise, particularly from guns. In Portland, the homicide rate surged 207% since 2019 and there have been more than 800 shootings so far this year. In Phoenix, police Chief Jeri Williams said this week the gun violence was the worst she'd seen in 33 years on the job.

"How many more officers have to be shot? How many more community members have to be killed before those in our community take a stand? This is not only a Phoenix police issue, this is a community issue," she said after a weekend that tallied 17 shootings and 11 homicides citywide.

Now, police are on edge heading into Labor Day weekend, with its traditional end-of-summer festivities, and some are adding extra patrols as they brace for more potential violence.

In Portland, police busy with three killings and nine non-fatal shootings in 48 hours couldn't control three illegal street races last weekend that attracted hundreds and shut down major intersections for hours. In Houston, the day after a gunman shot five neighbors, killing three, another man shot two sisters before killing himself.

In the past two weeks, authorities in Phoenix have confiscated 711 guns and made 525 gun-related arrests as part of a targeted crackdown. Nearly 90% of homicides there this year were by gun, police said. In Detroit, where a man is accused of shooting three people at random on city streets last weekend, authorities are also cracking down on gun violence in high-crime neighborhoods through Labor Day.

"Let's stop talking about our inability to respond to crime in the community. Let's stop advertising to criminals that they're going to get away with it," Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler said, using an expletive at a City Council meeting this week after police Chief Chuck Lovell once more asked for more officers.

"I think we should stop using the messaging at every turn, that the reason we can't help our citizens with basic criminal justice issues is because we don't have the personnel," Wheeler said. "We've got to figure out better ways to address this crisis."

Last weekend's rampages — which included a heavily armed assailant who stormed a central Oregon supermarket, random shootings on Detroit streets and a Phoenix man who opened fire while wearing body armor — were shocking and scary, but they aren't representative of the broader toll gun violence is taking on American society, experts said.

Victims killed in mass shootings make up about 1% of all those killed in gun homicides nationwide, despite headlines that instill fear in many Americans, said James Fox, a professor at Northeastern University who has created a database of mass killings stretching back to 2006 with The Associated Press and USA Today.

All four shootings last weekend didn't even meet the database's definition of a mass killing — four or more people, excluding the assailant, killed in a 24-hour period — but they nonetheless sowed fear because of the random nature of the violence, he added.

“Those don’t tend to make news. They don’t tend to scare people because people say, 'Well, that’s not my family," Fox said. “We have as many as 20,000 gun homicides a year, and most of those are one victim. Sometimes two, sometimes three, (but) rarely four or more.”

The pandemic and the social unrest it caused has also played a role. Eight million Americans became first-time gun owners between 2019 and 2021, said Jeffrey Butts, director of the research and evaluation center for the John Jay College of Criminal Justice at City University of New York.

“We already had 400 million guns in circulation. So when you bump that up and include a lot of first-timers in the population, you get accidents, you get precipitous behavior, you get people reacting to small insults and conflicts with their guns because they’re in their pocket now," he said.

Meanwhile Taylor's friends and family mourn his death in Portland.

The car aficionado and beloved big brother who loved barbecues and spending time with his family was “at the wrong place at the wrong time,” Russell said.

“He has a lot of friends and a lot of family who love him dearly, and this is a devastating loss.”

[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

